

ARTIST JULIE DOUCET OPENS UP HER COMIC BOOK PAST

# punk planet

notes from underground

ISSUE #73 | MAY AND JUNE 2006 | \$4.95 US  
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SHOPLIFTING

FIGHTING FAT DISCRIMINATION

DEATH FROM ABOVE 1979

20 YEARS OF NO IDEA

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AN ILLUSTRATED JOURNEY



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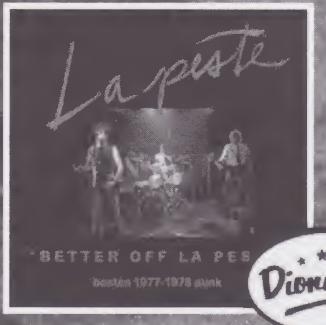


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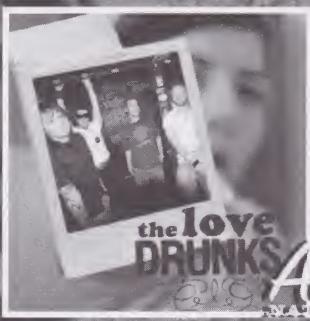
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## 09 Mail 13 Static

No Idea celebrates 20 years; Athens, Ohio authorities fail to see the humor in *This Bike is a Pipe Bomb*; Willowtip Records; and JAM fashions solar power.

## 88 Columns

## 94 Fiction

## 98 DIY Files

Early to Bed  
Everything that Eats, Lives

## 107 Reviews

Music  
DVDs  
Zines  
Books  
Comics

## 136 See Also

## Interviews

- 28 Propagandhi
- 34 Rat Patrol
- 38 Shoplifting
- 42 Gina Frangello
- 46 Death From Above 1979
- 48 Julie Doucet

## Articles

- 60 Coming Together  
*Five months after Hurricane Katrina, comics artist Christopher Cardinale traveled south to see what he could do to help.*
- 72 For a Good Time . . .  
*Stall walls host a compelling mode of communication—that's why so many rush to defend, study, and practice bathroom graffiti.*
- 76 Remembering the 1985 MOVE Bombing  
*Over 20 years ago, labeling theory and rogue policing brought about 11 deaths in Philadelphia. How can we stop it next time?*
- 80 Legislating Weight Loss  
*Maya Schenwar looks at the biases and profit-driven motives behind the so-called national obesity epidemic.*

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Yes, that's our office address. Please call first if you want to stop by. We will gladly sell you magazines and chat for a bit, if we're not pulling-our-hair-out insane.

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**Ads are due June 26 for PP75**

Ads not reserved will get in, but you have no say as to what issue. Any ads received after deadline may run in the following issue. Those are the risks—are you the gambling type?

the risks

# intro73

**R**ebuilding takes time. Whether it's rebuilding a city ravaged by flooding, restarting a career cut short, rethinking politics-as-usual, or even just redefining your band's sound, your zine's look, or your arts' style, it is not work for the impatient. But for those willing to put in the work and put up with the wait, rebuilding can lead to a stronger foundation than you had when you began.

Comic artist Christopher Cardinale, whose breathtaking illustrations grace our cover and 11 pages inside the magazine, became a part of that foundation when he ventured down to New Orleans to help gut houses, dig through belongings, and lend an ear to the many folks starting to rebuild their lives after Hurricane Katrina.

Taking inspiration from his experience there, Cardinale put together our very first cover story sketchbook, "Coming Together," which presents the faces and stories of people he met during his time in New Orleans. It's a beautiful and inspiring piece, and one I'm particularly proud of appearing in our pages.

For comics fans (and, of course, those interested in any kind of amazing underground art), this issue also features a rare discussion with artist Julie Doucet, whose graphic storytelling in the early '90s helped bring the Riot Girl aesthetic to comics. Since then, Doucet has left the comics community and rebuilt her life as a fine artist—only to watch as her work continued to gain fans. Our own Anne Elizabeth Moore sits down with Doucet to talk about why she left the field and her new work.

So you know, it's not just comics, comics, and more comics in this issue (though I will draw your attention to the continuing comic brilliance of *Iceberg Town* and *Best Summer Ever* in our Static section)—Propagandhi, Death From Above 1979, and Shoplifting talk music and politics; our articles section continues to push boundaries and buttons with looks at the 1985 MOVE bombing, the biases involved in the "obesity epidemic," and a look at bathroom graffiti; and of course there are close to 300 records, zines, books, DVDs, and, yes, comics reviewed in this issue. So enjoy!

Finally, we've been doing some rebuilding of our own here at *Punk Planet*, finally digging ourselves out from under most of the debt and disorder that came from our distribution troubles late last year. While we're not completely in the clear, we're closer than ever thanks to the generosity of folks like HeWhoCorrupts Inc, whose late April benefit festival for us once again reinforces our belief that there is no stronger foundation than that of the shared values and struggles of the underground. Thanks to them and thanks to you for your continued support and belief in our work.

Enjoy the issue and have a great spring,

DAN

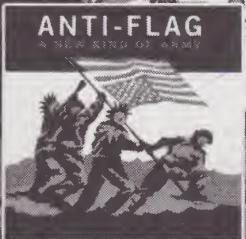
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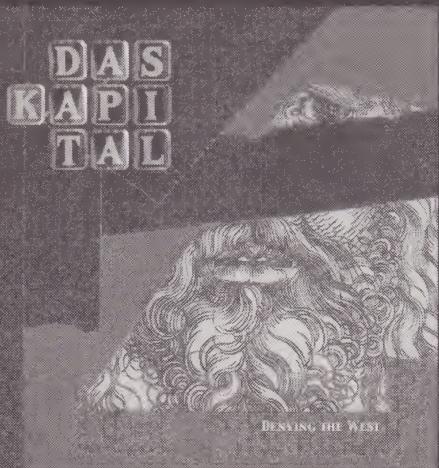
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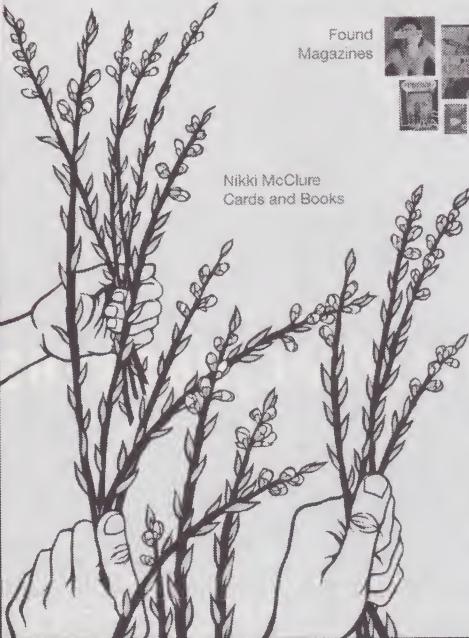
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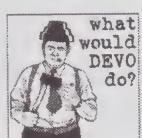
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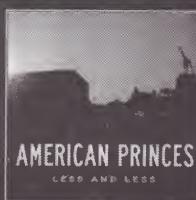
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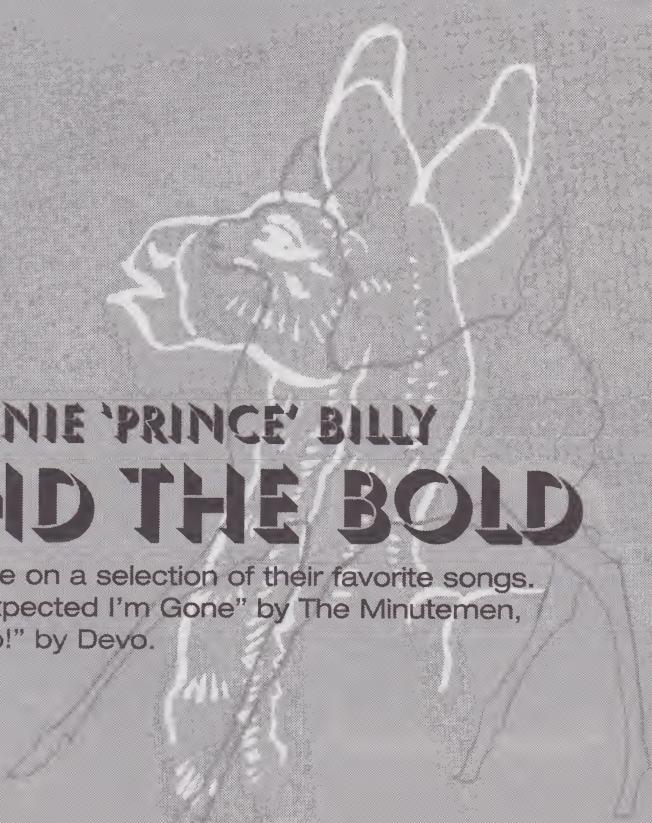
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# mail73

## Reviews: Dismay and Gratitude

► Dear Punk Planet,

I'm writing to express my dismay over your new reviews section. While I usually don't have much interest in the bands you interview, I still read them because they're well written. I do enjoy most of the articles contained especially ones of a political nature. After reading everything else, I'll read reviews and your reviews section was one of the best around.

Why so much space is given to "Reviewer Spotlights" is beyond me. It's OK to talk about influential albums but not in a whole column format! The way it was done for years was quite acceptable and left room for reviews of recent releases which should be the focus. While you never interview the type of bands I enjoy, I could at least read a review. But looking through PP70 I see a dearth of hardcore, crust, thrash reviews. It's all indie and jock-core bullshit. I like to get a broad range of opinions on music and read many zines for that purpose. Sadly, no more with Punk Planet. I'll probably still read PP but now with a lack of zeal knowing there's a half-

assed review section mainly filled with opinions on albums yeas old and very little else.

Yours truly,  
Mark Grieve  
Melbourne, Australia

PS It's seriously awful!

► PP—

I have been a fairly regular reader of *Punk Planet* for several years. I am writing to convey gratitude and congratulations: In 2005, I submitted for review a self-recorded, self-released collection of acoustic-guitar-and-voice songs, called *the Baby and the Bathwater*. I was pleasantly surprised to open PP72 to page 125, and see my name listed among those reviewed on punkplanet.com! Aware of the time it takes your reviewers to navigate submissions, I hadn't expected a review so soon . . . and online! In addition, my reviewer (Abbie Amadio) is most definitely a child of the high-speed digital age. Her stereo wouldn't play past the CD's third track, but she used her intuition (finely hewn from the PP reviewing trenches, I'm sure) as a guide in lambasting the whole thing. What efficiency!

Congratulations on your timely vision: designating a space on the web for the likely quick-quitters, the CDR-and-Kinko's-labels, the undercooked and unready; for an understanding yet aloof e-nod to the kids who don't quite get it, but try real hard. With a keystroke, they'll evaporate into the air from which they so easily and carelessly emerge, made local heroes by ensuing (self-fashioned) myths, or perhaps more likely, forgotten.

Best,  
Sam King  
Via e-mail

► Punks,

I just wanted to take the opportunity to thank you for reviewing my book, *Can You Hear Me Screaming?* in PP69. Apart from being a favorable review, it helped solidify my decision that the book was worth producing and promoting on my own. My freaking mom telling me over and over that something is good only goes so far, you know?

Thanks again,  
Eric Obenauf  
Brooklyn, NY

## We Owe You Another Book

► Punk Planet—

A month and a half ago or so, I ordered *We Owe You Nothing: Punk Planet—The Collected Interviews* and am reading and enjoying the hell out of it. Basically, I was just curious to know if you plan on putting out another book of collected interviews like this.

Respectfully yours,  
Andrew Jacobs  
Via e-mail

Hi Andrew,

We are planning another collection—this one of the most incendiary articles from our 12-year history. From the days when Green Day brought punk culture to mainstream society to the banal experience of trying to get a job at the post office, this collection will showcase those stunning stories from the underground that continue to influence our culture at large. *Weapons and Motives: Punk Planet—The Collected Articles* will be out in February. Keep it in mind: you'll probably enjoy the fucking hell out of this one.

E-mail your letters to letters@punkplanet.com or mail them to Punk Planet attn: letters 4229 N. Honore Chicago, IL 60613.

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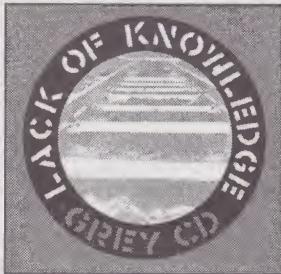
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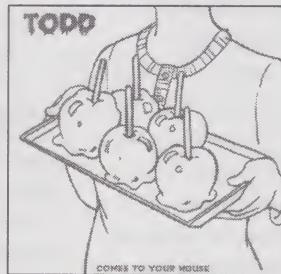
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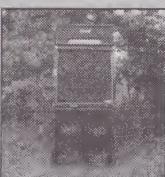
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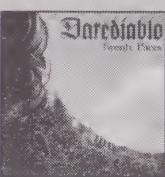
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## Disaster Strikes



### LIBERTY TOAST

Disaster Strikes have crafted their own unique brand of punk and hardcore since their formation in 1999. Singer J.R.'s life experience as a full-time union organizer infuses the lyrics- comparable to lyrics by Jello Biafra or MDC at their height-with truth and political edge that can't be bought at Hot Topic.

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## Nardwuar the Human Serviette

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Available in Canada on Mint Records.  
Does not include music by artists interviewed.



## MICHAEL PARENTI

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Award-winning historian and author Michael Parenti delivers his on-target observations based on historical facts of America's tendencies towards creating a world empire, in spite of our democracy at home and democratic movements abroad. Also includes an intimate look at how he became one of the most well known academic troublemakers of the Vietnam era!

## NAUSEA

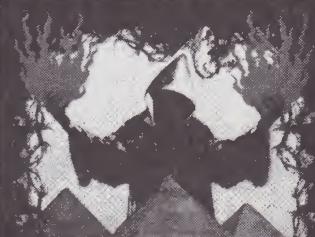
### THE PUNK TERRORIST ANTHOLOGY VOL. I



The first volume of Nausea's anthology featuring their early years is now available on Alternative Tentacles as a companion to *The Punk Terrorist Anthology, Vol II* (Virus 338). Released in cooperation with Blacknoise Records.

## AKIMBO

### FORGING STEEL AND LAYING STONE



Throughout their eight-year existence, AKIMBO has built layers upon layers to their fortress of Rock, buttressed by a string of releases culminating in their fourth album and Alternative Tentacles debut. Featuring members of Tight Bros from Way Back When and Home Eradicus.



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# static

SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

## "It was forbidding and a little bit scary, but it was also really intriguing."

NO IDEA RECORDS' VAR THELIN LOOKS BACK AT TWO DECADES OF PUNK ROCK

The roots of Var Thelin's Gainesville, Florida-based label were planted by the kind of desire that is always there: a necessity of expression. Starting originally as a zine in '85 with a friend who had done a DIY comic and having "no idea" what to call it, *No Idea* was born. When its sixth issue came packaged with a 7" of local band, the Doldrums, *No Idea* records began to slowly take shape.

After releasing 7-inches featuring bands like Radon, Crimpshrine, Jawbreaker, and Bim Skala Bim, the label released its first CD by the Gainesville band Spoke in '94. Though the zine eventually ceased operation due to a lack of time and personal energy, Thelin has kept going with the label.

Still pressing vinyl (along with CDs) even in a day and age where recorded music takes up more hard drive space than shelf space, *No Idea* has released nearly 200 records on CD and LP by various acts like Hot Water Music, Less

Than Jake, Against Me!, and I Hate Myself.

As a zine, a label, a mailorder house, and a distributor, Thelin has been doing *No Idea* in some form or another with a variety of people for 20 years now. Caring about the whole scene and not its mass-market viability, *No Idea*'s passion comes as a breath of fresh air.

### What was your first introduction to punk rock?

You know, the first actual hardcore that I had was from a tape with Black Flag and on the flip was Roach Motel and the *We Can't Help It If We're from Florida* comp on Destroy Records. That was my first experience *really* sitting there being like, "I have a punk-rock tape. What am I getting myself into?" I literally sat next to my bed at night with a blanket pulled over my head and headphones on, trying to put it in perspective. It was for-

bidding and a little bit scary, but it was also *really* intriguing. I'm also really proud of the fact that some of the first stuff I got into was local. I mean, I'm serious: Roach Motel/Black Flag, I heard them at the same time. So, even though it was obviously a really funny joke with the related band names, at least I got into a Gainesville band at the same time as Black Flag.

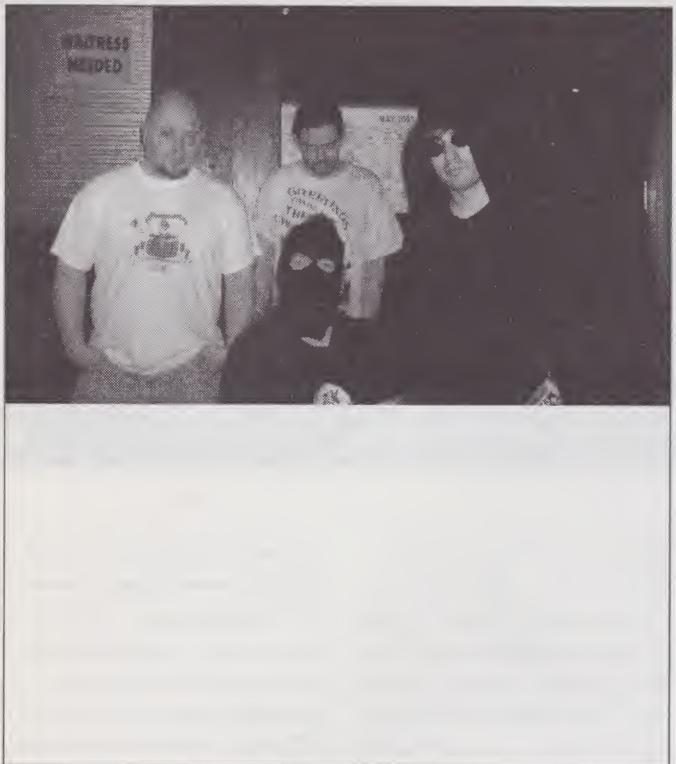
### How did you go from there to doing *No Idea*?

My friend Ken Coffelt did a comic thing with some friends called *Rats Magazine*. They did around a dozen issues in junior high. That was a huge influence on me, being 15 at the time: "Oh wait, kids can do this?" Up until then, I always assumed that if you saw a magazine, a big company did it. If you saw a record, a big company did it. It was never me. It was never *people*. And so it was very empowering. It was this whole new attitude of "We could do something *now*."

### When you were getting started, was the Gainesville scene documented at all?

To an extent. The last lo-

cal vinyl that I was aware of was the second Roach Motel 7". So from there until we put one out, no local bands put out any records for a good four years. In terms of a "scene," that's an eternity. People just didn't realize that you could do a record yourself. The thing was, bands would be around for four or five years and they would write a lot of songs, scrap a lot of songs, keep playing shows and over time, usually they'd turn into something. But then about the same time that it really all gelled, they were gone. They'd graduate college and leave town, and at best you'd be left with one demo tape that they'd recorded in someone's bedroom. ¶ The big local band in '86-'87 was the Doldrums, who mixed the hardcore energy of Government Issue and Naked Raygun with the rock of Black Sabbath and AC/DC. At one point, they could draw 250 people. They were the band who brought in diverse kinds of people, but they were still the punk band. At the time, I happened to



## "We're not gonna stand around up there and just look good. We're not there to just pose. We're there to give people an experience."

YOU WON'T CATCH NEW YORK'S BLACKOUT SHOPPERS PLAYING EMO-METAL

Seth Amphetamines won't let you not pay attention to the Blackout Shoppers. An intimidating presence in dark glasses and a sweatshirt with the hood on, even in a dingy, shadowy nightclub, the singer jumps into the audience to scream in your face and dares you to scream back.

The band, which also includes Joey Heathen on drums, Mike Moosehead on guitar, and Blackout Matt on bass, was the second opening act for Murphy's Law at New York's Continental on New Year's Eve. More than a few people left with free homemade CD-R copies of the band's EP *Smash and Grab*, on which they amusingly refer to themselves as "the band that fucked your mother." DIY? Absolutely. All of the band members are in their 30s and draw their inspiration from early '80s hardcore—which they were actually around to experience first-hand—and it shows in their music. The Blackout Shoppers play hardcore the way it was meant to be: rough and raw, with absolutely nothing emo about it.

learn about how to make records by writing a couple of labels—they told me, "Here's a couple pressing plants to use. Here's what it costs." So from there, we just got determined to do it.

**Do you try and pass along what you've learned to upstart labels now?**

Definitely. Dischord was one of the first labels that we sent a zine to who wrote back and they were one of the places that I asked questions of and who always gave advice that made sense. They're a big influence on me as far as how I try to be able to treat other people who ask for advice. "Hey, Dischord took time out to give advice to me; I better take some time out to give it to others."

### Two decades down the line, what keeps you doing No Idea?

Probably just insanity, if nothing else. Being compulsive, partially. There's a flow to it. When you're involved in something for long enough, it drags you with it. I think that's sort of the case with No Idea. There are definitely days where I get dragged into the office because that's the flow of how my life works. You know: get up in the morning, get here, do some work. Other days, it's the other way around—my inspiration is driving me to get things done. It's like the way some artists work, where they paint x-number of hours a day, day in, day out, because otherwise they're not going to get as much done. It doesn't mat-

ter if I'm doing good work or bad work or feel like I'm getting anywhere, I absolutely have to have that work ethic. ¶ The other thing is simply being involved with a lot of the people and all the music that is happening around us—that's enough to keep me involved and thinking, "This band that just recorded again has blown

me away. I want to get this out to the world to hear it." I hear something new and I immediately want to pass along to a friend. "Dude, check this out." It's the same thing with us releasing records; it's doing that a thousand times over.

—Eric Grubbs

Visit online at [www.noidearecords.com](http://www.noidearecords.com).

## "I just sat there and thought, 'Ouch, that stings!'"

LOS ANGELES ZINESTER AND SCENEASTER KAT JETSON TURNS A NEW PAGE WITH PROJECT INFINITY

Kat Jetson's been a major supporter of the Los Angeles punk scene for nearly a decade. As a writer, she's written for a slew of local weeklies and zines,

covering LA's up-and-coming artists. However, it was her contribution to 2002's LA punk compilation *Let's Get Rid of LA*—an accompanying zine—that brought

**What do you think of the current state of emo-metal that masquerades as hardcore?**

**Matt:** Certainly not worthy of the name hardcore.

**Seth:** No, not at all. I don't have any use for it. I guess the term "emo" has been tossed around since the time of Fugazi, and some of the Dischord bands that were starting to come out. But today you have bands like Atreyu and Funeral for a Friend. I suppose it's about kids getting out emotion and aggression. And maybe people listening to this stuff are the same kinds of people who 20 or 25 years ago would have been listening to bands like Black Flag or Circle Jerks and Dead Kennedys. But for me, with some of the bands that are out today, it's hard to know what it's really about—and hardcore was always about something. As soon as I was able to catch up with what Jello Biafra was rambling about, I was just like, "Oh my god I feel that way too."

**Mike:** With the majority of those bands, it's more commercial than it used to be. It seems like they're catering to the masses instead of keeping it true to the real fans. Which ruins it a little bit; doesn't make it quite as special.

**Do people realize what they're getting into when they come see the Blackout Shoppers?**

**Seth:** [Laughs.] If you're gonna come see a Blackout Shoppers show, be prepared to get the full brunt of the music. We're not gonna

her significant attention. *Let's Get Rid of LA* brought together 15 unique-sounding bands, each of whom shared a similar ethos and approach to their art. Following a brief hiatus from the "record business," Jetson's back with a new label, Project Infinity. Like *Let's Get Rid of LA*, Project Infinity's focus is on the quality of the bands represented. The label takes the now-unorthodox approach of releasing singles containing one original song and one cover of the band's choosing. Jetson hopes to expand to full-lengths by 2007.

**How did *Let's Get Rid of LA* come together?**

Well, I didn't know any of those guys [Gabriel Hart, Sondra Albert, Chris Ziegler] a year and a half before that compilation came out. I actu-

ally wrote Chris Ziegler a fan letter because he had these top-10 bands listed in OC Weekly and I ended up checking out all these bands he had listed; I thought all of them would be great to book shows for. So I emailed him and told him, "Thanks for introducing me to all this great music. I ended up booking some of the bands you mentioned." And he was all excited and said, "Oh, I think I know you. You write for *Razorcake*." And then I was at the Knitting Factory and so were Gabe and Sondra. And that was the first night that we talked. We sat in one of the little tables in the corner of the Knitting Factory and they were talking about this idea of putting out a comp and they asked me if I wanted to be a part of

stand around up there and just look good. We're not there to just pose. We're there to give people an experience, like I remember where you'd have Henry and Keith Morris and Jello and all those guys. They just put it out there every time. It's part of the show. It's not meant to just deliberately fuck with people and get them swinging at you. I'm not GG Allin taking a crap and throwing it at people, but at the same time, it's about experiencing the music.

**What types of audiences do you draw?**

**Matt:** When we can do all-ages shows, we get all types of people coming out.

**Seth:** It's hard to do all-ages shows in New York City. We have to find places that will actually allow you to have that kind of show. It's sort of like bands versus a lot of venues in a way. There's too many that absolutely flat out will not allow anything other than a 21-and-over show. As much as we like anyone who's around our age to be into our music because they definitely remember [hardcore], it's still the same kind of feeling with kids—they want your stuff, they want to know when you're playing again, they want to get on your list. Most of our friends and people around our age aren't as interested. They'll come out, but they'll be like, "Your shirt's 10 bucks, but I can spend that money drinking."

—Laura Weinstein

Blackout Shop for all their merch at [www.blackoutshoppers.net](http://www.blackoutshoppers.net).

that—I had no idea why—but we meshed well together.

**People talk about doing stuff like that, but it never happens!**

I can't believe we put the [accompanying] 40-page magazine together! That part was influenced by the Rodney on the Roq compilations.

**Tell me how Project Infinity came together.**

The reason I put Project Infinity together was because I was trying to expand. I wrote the *Village Voice* and Chuck Eddy said my writing was "sparse and not *Village Voice* material." So I just sat there and thought, "Ouch, that stings!" And I just got tired of pitching. I just took the experience of putting out that compilation and thought, "I have a

friend who's an engineer and he records bands in his own studio. And I know so many bands that I love who don't get enough credit." And booking shows is an utterly thankless job, so I figured I'd do something more lasting. ¶ My first release is going to be Bad Dudes, who I adore. I think they're amazing. So the original idea is to do one original song and one cover. They're going to cover Led Zeppelin. I think they can pull it off. When I thought about people doing covers, I thought . . .

**You want someone to cover the whole Bangles debut EP!**

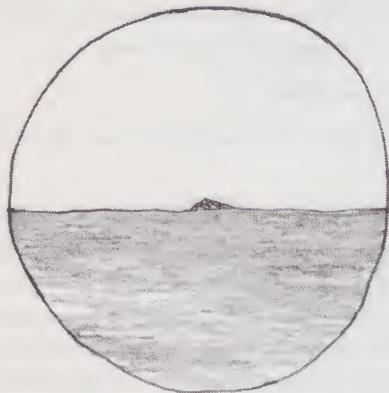
[Laughs.] Or a B-52's song! But they're Bad Dudes and they'll do it justice. —Ryan Leach

Project Infinity online: [www.projectinfinityrecords.com](http://www.projectinfinityrecords.com).

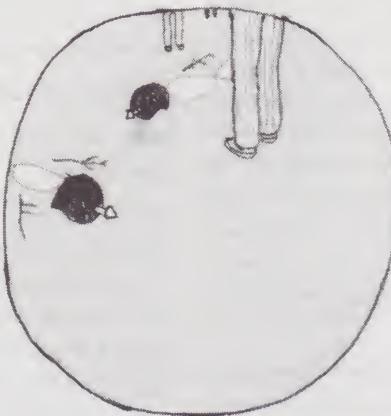
# Iceberg Town

BY JOE MENO AND NICK BUTCHER

After the sad results of the most recent election, many of us fled north. But the great continent could not bear the immense strain; a unnoticeable yet glaciarsized city drifted off into the ocean and the small strange world of Icebergtown was born then.



We are drifting further and farther south, and, as we do, our town has begun shrinking.



The president keeps issuing angry demands but no one is listening because his snowman army has all vanished, their menace only a silver puddle now at our feet.



Elise's igloo has melted and now she wants to sleep with me.

## "I encourage our students and other fans of the band to not display the name of the band in such a way that it leads to safety concerns."

ONE OHIO STUDENT'S SUPPORT FOR THIS BIKE IS A PIPE BOMB COST HIM LEGAL HASSLES AND HIS MODE OF TRANSPORTATION

Pat Hanlin has been locking his bike up for two years in the same location—in front of the Oasis Restaurant on the Ohio University campus in Athens, Ohio. For two years, no one took notice of the bike's sticker that promoted the Pensacola, Fla. band This Bike is a Pipe Bomb. But on a Thursday morning in early March, a campus security officer saw the sticker and in-

terpreted the message literally.

"I knew I was never gonna take this [bike] on a plane," the 28 year-old graduate student said in a phone interview, "you can't joke around at all in an airport. But you can't joke around Athens? Around town?"

Ohio University police contacted the Athens police and fire departments. Four nearby buildings were evacu-

ated while a bomb squad traveled 75 miles from Columbus to assess whether or not the bicycle posed a threat to campus security. When Hanlin came forward to defuse the situation, university officials charged him with "inducing panic," a crime that carries a maximum sentence of six months.

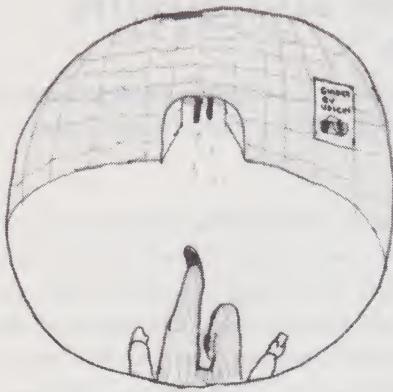
Ohio University's Dean of Students, Terry Hogan, released a statement to the media, saying, "I encourage our students and other fans of the band to not display the name of the band in such a way that it leads to safety concerns."

"Authority figures do not have a sense of humor," noted Chris Link, executive director of the Ohio chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, "and they're not

all that tied into popular culture." She attributed the over-reaction to the current political climate.

"They said inducing panic was like yelling, 'Fire,' in a crowded theater," said Hanlin. "In this case it's more like I put a sticker that said, 'Fire,' inside of an abandoned theater."

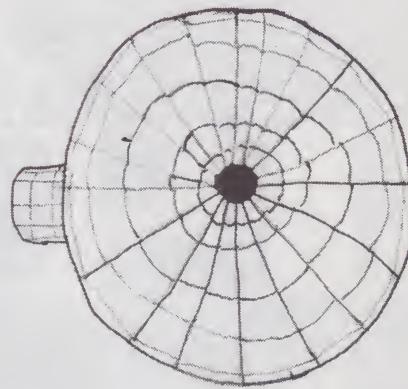
Terry Johnson, bassist and vocalist with This Bike is a Pipe Bomb, said, "Maybe everyone is seeing how out of control this fear is. Obviously, if you're planning some sort of subversive activity, you're not gonna advertise it." The band did not intend any subversion when they named themselves in 1996. "Honestly, we booked a two-week tour before we had a name. People kept calling, saying, 'We need a name



I tell her I do not think it is such a good idea. I tell her I am afraid if we sleep together that she's going to find a reason to laugh at me.



Elise does not care. She says she's coming over tonight and that she's already made up her mind.



We are like two Eskimos, in the dark, kissing with our mouths and eyes.

to put on the flyer.' "Johnson and guitarist Rymodee were in tight with the Bike House in Pensacola so they knew they wanted a bicycle-themed band name. "One night me and 'Modee were on the porch and said, 'That's it!' Just because it's long and stupid."

"Long and stupid," is also a good description of the ordeal that authorities put Pat Hanlin through for six days before dropping the charge of inciting panic. Hanlin describes a Chris Rock routine where the comedian is pulled over by police who are suspicious that he is driving an expensive car. Rock begins to believe that perhaps the cops are right after all—that maybe he did steal it. "That's how I felt when I left the police station, that everyone in the

world would feel the way the cops did." He knew his story would attract attention; he was surprised that it also attracted so much support.

"People from everywhere wrote to the president of Ohio University and the police station," said Hanlin. "Nobody knew what I looked like, who I was; all they knew was I was Patrick Hanlin, 28 years old, graduate student."

"I definitely don't look like a punk fan, whatever that means," Hanlin added. "But all these people saw something that was unfair and they started doing something about it. And I was so grateful; it really eased my mind. I'm amazed at people willing to stand up and speak out for somebody they don't even know." Hanlin is amused by the T-shirt designs

he has seen online, including one that says, "Patrick Hanlin is Not a Pipe Bomb," and, "I, Myself, am a Pipe Bomb."

The bomb squad destroyed his bike and, a few days later, his car died. He's getting around Athens on a borrowed bicycle. This Bike is a Pipe Bomb is planning a benefit concert in Ohio to raise funds for a replacement bike for

Hanlin. People have posted to Internet bulletin boards, encouraging him to put another one of the band's stickers on his next bike as well.

"I think the next sticker might say, 'This Bike is a Bike,'" Hanlin says.

—Andrew Reynolds

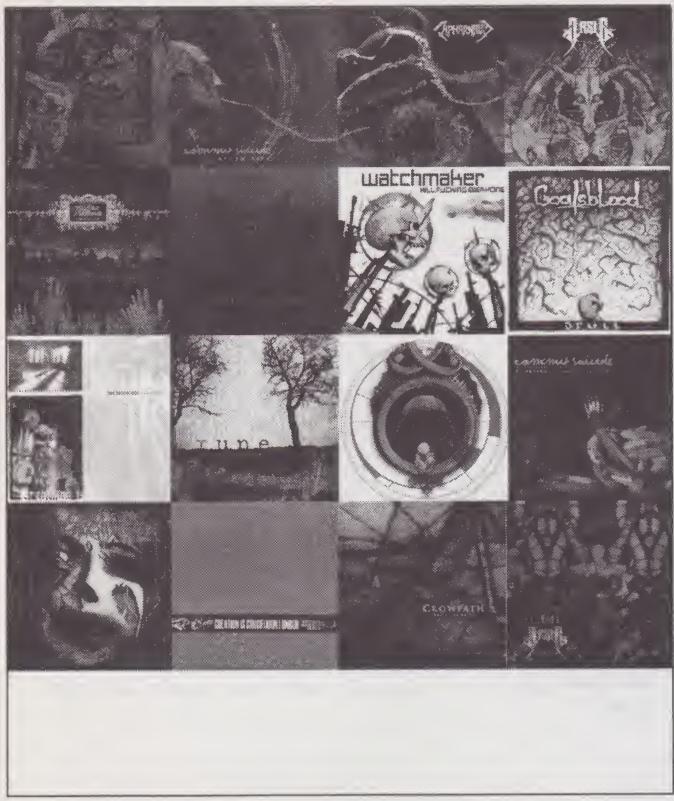
Order all the CDs you want, just don't go parading them around Athens, Ohio: [www.plan-it-x.com](http://www.plan-it-x.com).

## "There are no ska-letons in our closet."

A GREAT NOISE CAN BE HEARD DOWN IN CENTRAL FLORIDA: CEPHIA'S TREAT RECORDS

**H**ow would you like it if some jerk called your songwriting "noise?" Todd Lynne poses that question, tongue practically safety-pinned to cheek, on the website

promoting his label Cephia's Treat Records, an operation that delights in homemade instruments, unconventional performance, and—get your ear plugs ready—unholy vol-



**"Truthfully, I rarely ever listen to vinyl anymore, but I love to put it out and make the vinyl editions we do as deluxe and quality as possible."**

JAMES TIPTON'S WILLOWTIP RECORDS IN PENNSYLVANIA RELEASES BOTH KINDS OF METAL: DEATH METAL AND GRINDCORE

If there's one thing to be learned from collecting heavy metal music (especially on vinyl), it's that one should buy a quality piece of merchandise when one sees it. Even though it might be a little too expensive, and you think you could get a better deal elsewhere, buy it. Tracking that shit down later will be an exercise in frustration: most used metal CDs and LPs turn up with the evidence of the previous owner's neglect (dried bong water, stoned ramblings written in ink on the sleeve, weird crud, etc.), causing your frustration to be amplified due to the fact that you've finally found a copy of whatever it is you want, only for it to be completely destroyed.

Enter Pennsylvania-based Willowtip Records. Headed by 28-year-old James Tipton, the label was originally conceived in 1998

ume. Since 1991, when he and his brother Ian sold tapes for a buck to middle and high school peers in Central Florida, Todd Lynne has been immersed in projects of great interest to Florida's finest connoisseurs of junk electronics and wild improvisation. He's worked the pirate-radio circuit, performed solo as the cinema-sampling beat monster Haves&Thirds, and helped organize a series of shows in atypical venues such as construction sites, under bridges, and at bus stops. (A highlight, Lynne notes, was the Hepatitis Youth "mall tour".) Now, alongside outfits like Providence's Kinky Noise Records, Maryland's Human Conduct Records, and the yearly International Noise Conference in Miami, Lynne's Cephia's Treat Records has found itself part of a hyper-personal, uncompromising crew of sound warriors that extends itself across the country.

#### What has been the evolution of Cephia's Treat Records?

We haven't gone through "phases," more like waves of activity. It's not like we were putting out pop-punk and hardcore 7-inches, then tapping the emo scene, and then rummaging through the garage-rock dumpster. There are no ska-letons in our closet. There definitely have been periods when everything was rolling along for us. These waves were of a couple of releases coming out fairly quickly, a bunch of active bands around, and consistent shows.

#### Who do you consider the label's peers?

Pretty much until a few years ago it was just Ian and me locked in our own little world. All we talked about was put-

ting out this and that, the covers would look like this, a cool shirt would be that, a good show to put on would have so-and-so. It really annoyed our family. We would walk in for Christmas dinner and end up just sitting off by ourselves, talking about triple-LP Chickadees records and JFKs box sets. Then we met up with What's YR Damage? and Dead/Bird and our hope for the state of Florida flickered just a little bit. ¶ Remember, Florida has been and continues to be a stomping ground for some of the worst music on the planet so meeting all these people was almost like a little explosion. The best part was that everyone sounded very different. Everyone had their own individual shtick. There weren't 20 people pedal-hop-

ping with tape players, mixers and contact mics. It was all so good.

You've had some unusual experiences on the road. Could you talk about the Hepatitis Youth vs. Erase Errata tour?

The Hepatitis Youth were all about confronting people with sound, maybe making a superficial mess and never getting physical or antagonistic with people who weren't in on it. People would often get angry, grab guitars, and push, but we would never fight back. It was just sound and some of those people would flip their wigs. A few years ago we loaded up into two cars with a generator and followed Erase Errata from Washington DC all the way down to Tampa. The Hepatitis Youth would set up outside the

as a means to release a split 7" by friends [fate of] Icarus and Creation is Crucifixion, but Willowtip didn't really get rolling until 2000, when Tipton graduated college. Featuring two bands that were outside of the stereotypical death-metal or grindcore tags, the bar was set high from the get-go. Though Tipton was initially set to release a zine as well, the split took priority and the results were such that he decided to keep releasing records instead.

Completely self-sufficient from day one, Willowtip hasn't ever relied on loans to press records. "The initial releases were always funded from proceeds from the last release, or any money I could get," says Tipton. "Today, we're over 40 releases in and have many projects going on at once: bands recording and repressing albums . . . so we are, luckily, successful enough to be able to release many albums at once."

Having released records from such genre heavy-hitters as the aforementioned Creation is Crucifixion as well as Cephalic Carnage and Misery Index, Willowtip has also given exposure to new, even more over-the-top bands. American acts like Circle of Dead Children and Watchmaker have both released multiple records with the label, for example. Also, in an effort to bring lesser-known foreign bands to a wider audience, Tipton has released records from Finland's Rotten Sound, France's Gorod, and Sweden's Crowpath. Aside from the consistently quality music released on CD, one factor that sets Willowtip apart is the attention paid to vinyl. "I still love vinyl just cause you can do so much with

venue where Erase Errata were playing and during a break in between songs or bands we would pop our heads inside the place, count off with a loud "Hepatitis Youth!!!!" and then handle business. It was a war on "hip" music and trend-hopping labels and it had to

be done. To head out knowing that we wouldn't make any money, wouldn't have places to stay, and would be unwelcome at every stop was almost liberating. —Matt Preira

Check the label out online, without ever having to travel to the wilds of Central Florida: [www.cephastreat.com](http://www.cephastreat.com).

## "I'm pretty damn busy."

COLLEGE STUDENT, FILMMAKER, AND FOUNDER OF THE PAPERCUT ZINE LIBRARY MICHELLE "MOTHRA" MILLETTE KNOWS HOW TO GET THINGS DONE

There has been a lot of talk lately of blogs as the death of zines, or even of the Internet as the death of print, but that's not the story you'll hear from Michelle "Mothra" Millette, the founder of the Papercut Zine Library in

Cambridge, Mass. In September of 2004, the 23-year-old, dressed de rigueur in combat boots, a bullet belt, and a bandana around her neck, was helping a now-ex-boyfriend clean out his room; astonished by the number of

the packaging and it looks so much cooler than a CD," states Tipton. "Truthfully, I rarely ever listen to vinyl anymore, but I love to put it out and make the vinyl editions we do as deluxe and quality as possible . . . gatefold, glossy covers, and thick vinyl." Vinyl fanatics are grateful, though, as the metal community tends to lean toward the vastly inferior picture-disc format of vinyl, while Willowtip sticks to the tried-and-true colored and black wax.

Although death metal is not the most popular music, Tipton remains steadfast. "I put out albums that I enjoy first and foremost. Technical death metal and grindcore are probably my two favorite genres, though I enjoy all forms of metal," he confesses. "Releasing death-metal and grindcore albums isn't the greatest genre in the world if you are looking to make a ton of money. However, there is definitely a market and demand for it."

While he's not exactly releasing the most popular forms of music around, Tipton is able to work full-time running his label. "Thankfully, Willowtip is all I do. The label has grown quite a bit over the years and it's successful enough to do full time."

The growth of Willowtip isn't surprising, considering that Tipton adheres to the age-old formula of a successful business: don't skimp. With two releases already scheduled for 2006 (*Phobia's Cruel*, and the frequently overlooked Dim Mak's third album, *Knives of Ice*), Willowtip shows no signs of slowing down. —Dave Hofer

Getcher forward-thinking metal here: [www.willowtip.com](http://www.willowtip.com).

zines he had lying around, she asked him why he didn't do something with them. Thus the idea for Papercut took shape.

The Papercut opened in April of 2005 with just 145 zines Mothra had rounded up. A year later, the collection houses over 5000 at last check and grows daily. The zines come mostly from patron donations, but also from donated money spent at local zine fairs. The room won't fit more than ten people, and the shelves are starting to overflow. But that doesn't stop anyone from coming in.

In addition to Papercut, Mothra is currently a full-time student at Massachusetts College of Art. She is working as a script supervisor on a short film, starting a radi-

cal-filmmakers collective, doing skill shares in the local anarchist collective, editing her first music video, learning how to play bass and writing a feature length screen play. Mothra also works 40 hours a week editing for XYTV.

"I'm pretty damn busy," she said. "I don't even rely on caffeine." One might even question if she has time to sleep. "I sleep! I do sleep," she says. Then she admits "Well, I didn't sleep last night because I was at work editing."

The library started as a collective of only a few people, but grew larger when "some girl" notified them that she knew of a space for the archive: the Harvard Social Forum hall. The Socialists who run the hall offered a room, rent free, in exchange

## GALLERY: How to Harness Your Personal Power



Jane Palmer and Marianne Fairbanks work collectively as JAM on Personal Power, a project that started in 2002 based on the run-up to the current Iraq War. Their goal was to find a way to disconnect

for promises to keep the place clean. That's where the library now sits, nestled in the front room.

"It was a lot easier process than I thought it would be," Mothra said.

Mothra is happy with how far the library has come. She works only 12 hours a week and attends the weekly meeting. "It's settled to a point where people can work stuff out on their own," she said.

After graduating this spring, Mothra plans to stick around Boston for another year and see what comes up, but if filmmaking doesn't work out for her here, she's going to move to New York. Mothra hopes Papercut will grow. "I would love it if it became a radical community center,"

she said. But that would require moving to a larger space that would probably charge rent.

Mothra's personal goals, however, are not fixed on the zine library. "I just want to make films and not have to work a crappy retail job," she said. "I would love to see a stronger film community in Boston." But, she acknowledges, "there's no money here."

In a scene where sometimes talk is cheap and action scarce, talk like Mothra's is usually blown off as lot of hot wind, but there are over 5000 arguments housed in the Harvard Social Forum that prove Mothra finishes what she starts and means what she says.

—Mike Rund

**"If you have six people dressed up—it doesn't have to be matching—and singing, that's like the hardest thing you can do."**

CANADA'S BOOZY CHANTEUSE CAROLYN MARK TAKES A BREAK FROM HER GRUELING TOUR SCHEDULE

For a lot of people, music starts off as a fun thing to do with your friends—but it quickly becomes something else: a career, a way to establish a name, a youthful endeavor abandoned in favor of more serious pursuits. Yet for Canadian folk-tinged singer/songwriter Carolyn Mark, music has always remained something fun she did with her friends. Her songs show it, too: intimate, caring, hilarious—and as spontaneous and open to interruption as

a real-life conversation with your childhood pals.

"I was *totally* dreaming about Vincent Gallo last night," Mark sings on 2004's *The Pros and Cons of Collaboration*. "Again / Whoops I dropped the phone."

Unabashed love for the famous is a common theme for Mark: in "Matineed," a tune from *The Other Women*, her 2000 collaboration with Neko Case recorded under the name the Corn Sisters, tells about a crush on a



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movie star. At first, the crush is all fantasy: he's a movie star, after all. Then, the narrator reveals her crush is different when she meets him in person—"I'm good friends with his wife," Mark sings. Finally, the narrator ties up her crush and pushes him over a cliff in a shopping cart. For love.

Love tends to get a bad rap in Carolyn Mark songs—alcohol, however, fares a bit better. In fact, she writes quite a bit about drinkin', describing herself in interviews as a boozy chanteuse. But with six albums in the last five years, all on Mint Records, a dedication to the bottle is certainly not holding her back.

A former farm girl, raised by a pianist father and devoted to the music of Patsy Cline, Wanda Jackson, and Lucinda Williams, Mark's albums convey the easy intimacy

of a shared bottle of whiskey and late-night confessionalists. *Punk Planet* caught up with Mark on a brief respite from the road.

**You've been touring a lot lately.**

I'm home for thirteen whole days! I went all over Canada, California and the Yukon, and I went to Norway.

**Your tours are pretty DIY affairs. I passed by a venue in Seattle as you were loading in, and it was, like, you and your friend, just loading stuff in from your Honda Civic. Is that how you still tour?**

Yeah, we do it all different ways. Mostly just a car or someone else's van . . . or we walk.

**And you do this regularly. How many days are you on tour per year?**

I'm not one of those people . . . I don't add it up. If I were adding it up, it would have to be at the point that the year was over. So it doesn't matter.

**Do you have more fans in Canada or in the US?**

Oh, more in Canada. I'm going to spend a lot of time in the states this Spring.

**There's a pretty crazy music scene up there in Vancouver. Do you feel like there's a Vancouver sound?**

Well, I'm from Victoria, so my heart lies in all that. But I play with everybody from Vancouver, and my friends are up there. But Vancouver's hard because there's no medium-sized venue for how big it is. There's 200-seaters, and 50-seaters, but there's nowhere to

play if you can bring 400 people, or up to 1000. So there's a problem in that. Although, we've all started putting on these hall shows, which are awesome.

**Hall shows?**

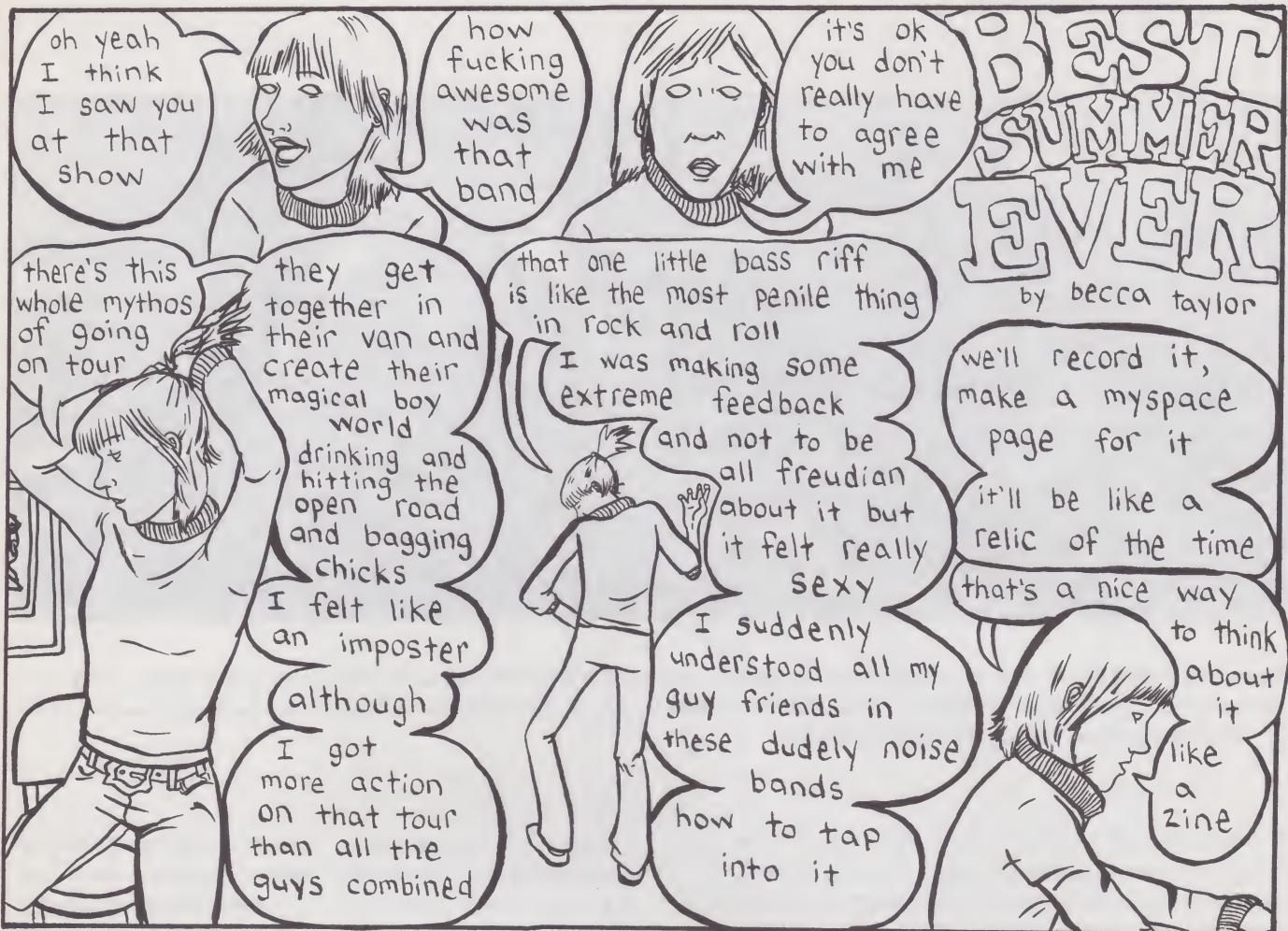
Yeah, hall shows. They make people behave better, and dress up. So I guess we have found an answer. If you have six people dressed up—it doesn't have to be matching—and singing, that's like the hardest thing you can do.

**You think?**

I think so. If you think about how hard it is to get six people to do anything.

**Are you still doing shows in Victoria every weekend?**

Every Sunday at 4:00. And if



I'm not here, I have deputies, like Jay McLaughlin and Clay George. It totally has these phases of all the same people, and then new people will move to town. I kind of like that.

**I would have thought you might have given up such an intimate venue with such an impressive touring schedule.**

They do say you're not supposed to play too much in your hometown, but I dunno.

**You've been playing music your whole life. Do you remember your first show?**

1990. I formed an all-girl band called the Vinaigrettes. We played at the university, at this place called Cafe Noir, a little coffeehouse in the all-purpose room. We had three songs. We got an encore, and so we had to play one of them again.

**One of my favorite albums of all time is the album that you and Neko Case recorded together, because there's something fun about listening to you and your friend doing these goofy songs together.**

Lately, we've been singing with

Kelly Hogan as a three-part Corn Sisters. It's pretty amazing. I'm gonna try to herd the ladies together for SXSW in Austin.

**Occasionally Neko comes up as a character in your songs, and you form collaborations with several other artists as well. How do you initiate these projects?**

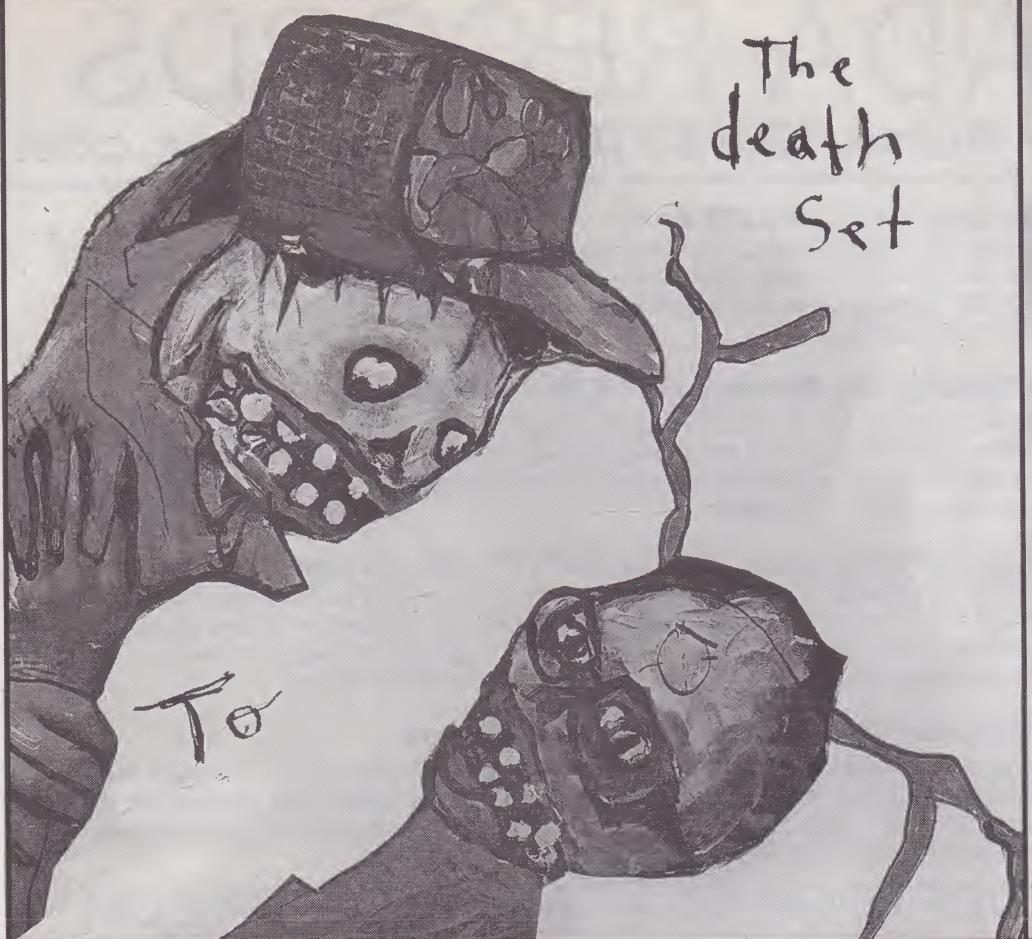
Well, Canada's like a small town, really. And I'd rather be friends with someone than be jealous of them, you know?

**And do these friends ever get upset with your portrayal of them?**

The songs are the least thinly disguised, but I've been writing tour diaries, and some of the main characters have taken issue with my perception of them. Like we just did a tour with 15 people. It was 15 days, 15 shows, 15 people. You're gonna have ups and downs within that. But the songs are fine. People don't mind the songs. Because at least they're veiled by music.

—Anne Elizabeth Moore

Submit recipes to Mark's series of cookbooks, *Terrible Hostess*, at [www.carolynmark.com](http://www.carolynmark.com).



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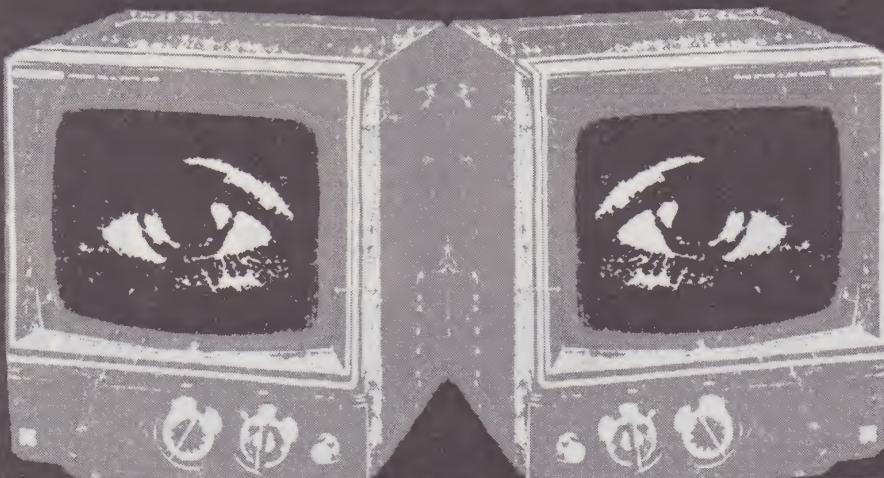
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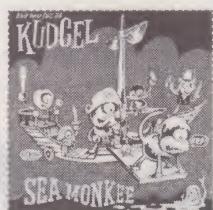
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003



004



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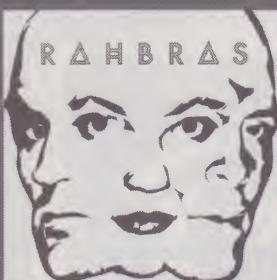
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**The Grey**  
*Asleep At The Wheel* CD

The Grey is a melodic rock quartet from Canada featuring ex-members of Shotmaker and Three Penny Opera. With influences ranging from Fugazi and Seaweed to Nick Cave and Neil Young, their new full-length, *Asleep at the Wheel*, casts a wide net. Listeners can be assured that powerfully charged hints of styles, new and established, can be found in their post-rock approach.

**Haram**  
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Haram's spectacular debut full-length cobbles together disparate aspects of punk and noise to conjure something wholly cohesive and engaging. Unrelenting and forward, the group's new record possesses a mature, tempered confidence that only comes with experience and do-it-yourself resolve. Haram features former members of Majority Rule, Pg. 99, and City of Caterpillar, among others.

**Rah Bras**  
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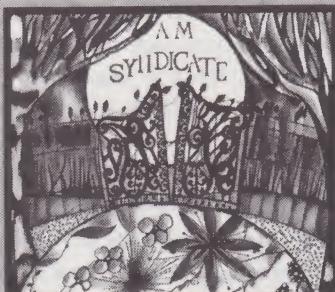
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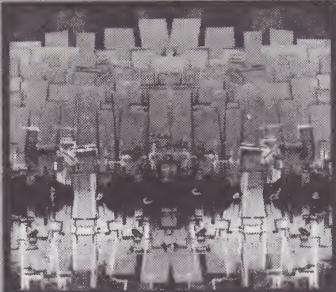
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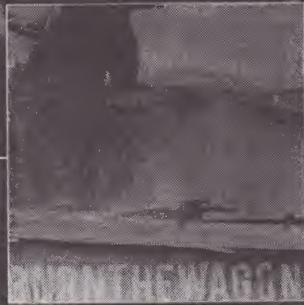
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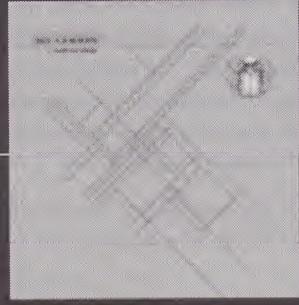
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**W**hen did punk rock become so safe?" asks Chris Hannah in "Rock For Sustainable Capitalism," a song from the latest musical offering by Canadian punks Propagandhi. *Potemkin City Limits* is the high-energy 2005 record featuring Hannah on guitar and vocals, Jordy Samolesky on drums, and Todd Kowalski on bass. The band is in rare form on this album, reminding us of the roots of punk rock by shattering illusion, creating community, and blasting high-energy music.

For over 10 years, Propagandhi have consistently pointed to the importance of social change through personal responsibility and action. They seem as surprised as anyone that they have developed a wide audience for their unique style of music and words that advocate animal rights, a vegan diet, and the bedrock anarchist qualities of self-reliance, political awareness, and discovering what is true for yourself. Band members also founded the independent record label G7 Welcoming Committee Records, proving that Propagandhi live what they preach. The band and label go beyond demanding we rebel against war and authority, but ask that we understand and uproot the machinations of fear and hatred that fuel modern systems of violence: from police with handguns to governments with weapons of mass destruction.

The fifth track on *Potemkin*, entitled "Bringer of Greater Things," is about the murder of three people by Saskatoon, Saskatchewan police. (Neil Stonechild, one of those murdered, is the subject of Susan Reber and Robert Renaud's 2005 book *Starlight Tour*.) Later on the album, Propagandhi tackle the issue of military recruiting in the US with the song "Die Jugend Marschierert," which opens with a recording of Nazi youth chanting praise in unison to national socialism of 1930's Germany. The final cut "Iteration" begins with a sample of president select George W Bush saying, "War crimes will be prosecuted . . . War criminals will be punished and it will be no defense to say, 'I was just following orders.'" The hypocrisy of a war criminal accusing others of war crimes is highlighted by the addition of a canned laugh track.

Propagandhi have always packed a punch, with under-produced records that feature hardcore tempos and a wall of sound mingling with the assertive lyrics and emotional short-essay-prose that make Hannah stand out as a vocalist. He is not afraid to be human and openly express his own despair, reflecting a generation backed into a corner. In "Life at Disconnect," he sings

"Maybe we really have nothing to say . . . Waiting for some catastrophe to bring us back to earth." Propagandhi awakens us to the madness of war and hatred and challenges us to hear the call to connect with life and truth.

At a recent show in Santa Cruz, Calif., the band took a break from their energized spray of sound and energy for a playful and sarcastic "word from our corporate sponsor," with their tour manager and a band member dressed as a milkshake and order of French fries. At the back of the venue, a literature table offered a buffet of reading material challenging global corporatization, de-humanized monoculture, the permanent US war economy, and censored news media, including writings by Howard Zinn, Ward Churchill, and Noam Chomsky.

Hannah and Propagandhi bring us vital punk rock filled with messages of freedom and radical political thinking. They challenge us to come alive and change the course of history instead of remain willing citizens, acquiescing to the powers that steamroll ahead in the name of revenge and war. Their message is clear: choose whether we want succumb to political propaganda or follow in the footsteps of Gandhi and create radical political and social change.

Interview by John Malkin

primitive assessments of both. I guess in a lot of ways the name has lost its original meaning to us as we've gotten older. It has become just an identifier for the band. ¶ You talked about self-reliance and Gandhi promoting self-reliance. That is interesting because most people immediately say "nonviolence." I think those things would still hold a lot of meaning for us, if the name Propagandhi were to mean something and if we were actually using propaganda to promote certain ideas like self-reliance and nonviolent change. These are definitely ideas that I think all three of us would be interested in and is how we would identify ourselves.

Your webpage notes, "Gains achieved through violent means are corrupt and doomed to violent failure." Can you tell me more about your ideas regarding violence and nonviolence?

Maybe that quote is too much of a blanket statement. But, as I have gotten older, I truly believe that you can't get to where you want to go by doing what the people going the other way are doing. I don't think that it really helps the greater psychology of the planet when people immediately resort to, or romanticize, the idea of using violence as a means of social change. I also think that historically it has borne out that groups



**Let's start with the name of your band, Propagandhi, which brings to mind, obviously, both Mohandas Gandhi and propaganda. Gandhi talked about, and lived in terms of, self-transformation and transformation of the world around him. He confronted an occupying force, advocated self-reliance, and focused on truth. I wonder which of these aspects of Gandhi resonates most for you?**

I should say first that we were all about 15 or 16 years old when we came up with the name in the mid-'80s. What we knew about both propaganda and Gandhi probably were very

that not only advocate or use it, but even consider violence, will attract elements that want to be violent. And it will do damage to their movement. ¶ I don't think that people should make blanket statements against "violence." And I think that people should be very thoughtful and very considerate before they engage in something that would be violent, especially against other people. Property is one thing, but people, that is a whole different ball game.

**In general, do you have any thoughts about why this planet is in the state that it is? There have been, for example, up to 35 wars going on all**



# PROPAGANDHI





of the time since World War II, leading some people to argue that violence is natural.

I have thoughts. They're speculations—there is no hard science that I have consulted. But, on this idea, there is a Chris Hedges book called *War Is a Force That Gives Us Meaning*. I think that he cites a study that says that there have been 29 years of recorded human history where there has been no war. So, is it natural? Is it the consequence of negative social relationships that evolved early on? I don't know. So many of us have an impulse against violence that I think it is just as natural. But violence is naturally the thing that people tend toward when they want to consolidate power and wealth.

It seems to take a lot of effort to educate people to be violent. If it were so natural, people wouldn't have to go to military training to be taught to view others as nonhuman and be able to act violently towards them.

We were actually having a huge talk about this last night with friends in San Francisco that went into the wee hours of the morning. It was about ideas on violence and related things, like responses to third-party violence. For example, the death of a US soldier in Iraq. You might hear somebody say, "Yeah, I cheer every time I hear that." I think, "What are you talking about? You cheer when you hear that someone has been killed? Are you talking tactically or do you enjoy that a human has died?" So, a

discussion evolved from that. ¶ It is something that I grapple with, too. When the towers went down, I watched it. We were in the States at the time and my first response was almost some sort of excitement. I knew it was happening and I knew the scale of the horror, but there is something . . . At least, for myself, I was brought up to confuse vengeance for justice. Through every movie that I ever saw, whether it was an underdog who punches out the bully, like *Rocky*, or all of this shit, it was a part of my upbringing. I was taught that violence is conflict resolution and when someone rises up and beats the bully or strikes a blow against the bully, then we should cheer. Now, as radicals or dissidents, there

are very few opportunities to cheer. It is a Pavlovian response. It is learned. And it is something I have grappled with because I grew up in a military family.

**It is interesting to notice that we are taught that justice comes through causing pain to others. The whole justice and prison system is based on the idea that if you make people suffer . . .**

. . . Then that's justice. Clearly it is too one-dimensional, it is too narrow of a way to define justice. I think that it has done some damage to all of us.

**There are ongoing debates about how television violence affects people. One idea is that television images helped to end the US war in Vietnam, although I am now hearing that that wasn't necessarily so. (See *War Made Easy* by Norman Solomon.) I grew up in a time when I was told that if people had information, they would take action to stop atrocities and war, but it doesn't seem to have happened.**

Clearly there has to be a new way of looking at this. There is a lot of information out there. Everywhere we go in North America, so many people have information. They know that things are wrong and they know why they

I am not sure that I have moved beyond despair or anger. I think anger is a very important state of mind. I think that it is often dismissed too easily as being reactionary. People talk about this aesthetically, too; that loud angry music is just not going to be heard. That you have to be quiet for people to listen. I understand that people are compelled by different forms of art, but I think that dismissing anger or dismissing loud music or angry manifestations of how you assess the world is a mistake. Anger is a response to violations against love. That's what it is. What's more righteous than anger? I don't really try to get beyond anger if it is actually what compels me to get involved and do things. I have no problem with it because I know where it comes from. It comes from the same place that quieter music or poetry comes from; it comes from the same place. ¶ With despair, I am not there yet. I do feel despair. Partially, because I know myself, and I imagine that most people aren't too different than me, and like I said, I don't do nearly enough. There are a lot of distractions around me. It is a very comfort-

**When did you first take notice of punk rock?**

I had heard things that are called punk rock when I was a little younger. I remember hearing the Ramones when I was a little kid but I just thought, "Maybe it sounds nice." But it didn't have an impact on me. But when I heard the band from San Francisco called Millions of Dead Cops, MDC, that was my first introduction to militant punk rock. Immediately I was shocked by the song titles and lyrics. I just couldn't believe it! My reaction was actually very negative at first. As I said earlier, I had grown up in a pretty conservative family and I just thought it was nonsense, what they were talking about. But I would just sit with the record all day, reading the lyrics over and over, getting less angry and more confused, trying to see the world through the lens they were offering with this record. I realized that when I held up my world view to theirs, theirs was more real. It reflected what was actually happening on the streets, whereas mine was some sort of Disneyland. From there on, I realized the power of music. Or the potential power of music; the way that music can be used to open your eyes.

**"I don't think that it really helps the greater psychology of the planet when people immediately resort to, or romanticize, the idea of using violence as a means of social change."**

are wrong. Sometimes they know details that are incredibly archaic about things that are wrong. But the next step, which we haven't moved toward, is taking that information and actually doing something with it. This isn't true of everybody. Lots of people are doing a lot of work that is awesome. But so many people, and I would count myself among them, are people that have information and should feel haunted by how little they do to actually connect with others and take chances and radically do things to concretely affect radical change around them.

**I hear in some of your lyrics a sense of despair, anger, and frustration with the state of the world. Can you say more about what helps you move beyond that?**

able Western lifestyle that I am involved in and it's very easy to sink into a sofa and watch television. That's haunting.

**In the song "Resisting Tyrannical Governments," you talk about the sense of privilege that you know that you have but note that it doesn't stop you from taking action in the world.**

It shouldn't. It really shouldn't. You should try to be engaged however you can. And people shouldn't feel guilty about what they were born into. They should leverage what they have and do what they can instead of pretending that they weren't born into privilege, which is very common in the punk scene; people pretending that they don't have access to the same things that other people do.

**There is a Propagandhi song where you sing about the sacred qualities of music. Tell me more about your enjoyment of music and what comes through you when you are making music.**

Contrary to this [recent] tour and everything, where you get in a van and you travel around and set up your equipment in a different venue at a particular time, and you're told to be on stage at a certain time and despite how you're feeling you perform a set of songs for a crowd that's paid money and will assess what you're doing . . . I enjoy playing music with Jord and Todd in the basement and that's about it. I am not a performer. I am not a musician. I am not an artist. I am a music enthusiast and I think music is

most true when you're making it with other people and not having it assessed by others, especially people who have paid. It is the life I am currently in, but it is something I grapple with all of the time and I am very confused about all of the time. Touring for me can be a very unhappy time. We travel from one Kentucky-Fried city to the next and it just isn't how I think music should be, for me personally. I go to shows. I like to see a band come through town, but it is not how I want to make music, really.

**Besides making music and writing lyrics, how do you spend your time?**

Well, I've really got myself tied up in music, unfortunately, in the past 20 years. Derek, who plays drums in the Greg McPherson Band, he and I run a collectively-run record label in Winnipeg [The G7 Welcoming Committee]. We put out records by a slew of bands as well as spoken-word CD's of Chomsky, Zinn, Ann Hansen, and Ward Churchill, people like that. When we are not making our own music, we are trying to help other people put out their music that otherwise might be pushed to the margins.

**I have read that the G7 Welcoming Committee uses a participatory economics structure. Tell me how you learned about this structure and how it functions.**

There is a collectively-organized book-store and café in Winnipeg that started in 1995 called the Mondragon Café and the people who started the place were very familiar with Robin Hahnel and Michael Albert's writings on ParEcon—participatory economics. We were interested in a collectively run record label and we saw what the Mondragon was doing. They had a statement of principles and they had a constitution. We thought, "Wow, where is this all coming from? How are they collectively arriving at this?" They said that they had been inspired by the ParEcon model and we took a look at it and said, "Yes, this really resonates with us." It is a values-based system rather than a profit-based, or profit-gearred, system. That is exactly what we wanted to do. It's not a rule book. There is not a ParEcon book that you get from Michael Albert and you run your business based on it, it is a set of values that resonated with us and makes a lot of sense. He speaks of it

in terms of not just businesses, but in terms of how interconnected societies in the larger society may actually operate. You can check it out at [www.parecon.org](http://www.parecon.org). You can participate in discussions about ParEcon and its defects and faults or what is great about it. Or you can write about your particular application of it if you have tried to start, for example, a bicycle repair collective. People give feedback and it is very interesting and constantly evolving, which I think is important, too. It's not just a rigid thing that people have to subscribe to.

**The idea of changing a small system and thereby affecting larger systems is a philosophy that Gandhi spoke about and lived. It seems to me that self-transformation is a part of social transformation, and clearly punk rock is not compatible with institutionalized anything. I wonder if you can tell me about the importance of self-transformation in the context of social change?**

For me personally, it is very important. Especially where I came from as a kid. I spent fourteen years being a very, very stupid person. Or a very sequestered person. I think I was sequestered from

**"I am not a performer. I am not a musician. I am not an artist. I am a music enthusiast and I think music is most true when you're making it with other people and not having it assessed by others, especially people who have paid."**



the realities of the world outside of living on military bases and outside of reading statistics about different countries and how many tanks each country had. It was a very childish worldview. I think I was being weaned to be some sort of robot in the military. ¶ The initial transformation I spoke of earlier, through finding bands like MDC, was pivotal in my life. I wouldn't credit punk rock from then on too much, because I have found a lot of punk rock since then, especially in the past ten years, to be vacuous. It is meaningless to me, aesthetically, and often even when I feel that the politics are right on, it doesn't transform me! I would credit more interpersonal relationships as transforming me. ¶ A guy like me is going to be trying to evolve and get a little smarter until I am dead. I have met people who are about 18 years old who blow me away! I think, "Well, this kid doesn't need to transform much anymore!" It makes me feel kind of bad. But, for myself, it has got to happen. From year to year, I have to feel something more, I have to enhance what I know. I feel it every so often.

### Bands like Shelter?

I was thinking of Cro-Mags, but yeah, Shelter as well. Cro-Mags especially. If you think about those boys, they were singing about street justice and all of this stuff, but they had some ideas about nonviolence and vegetarianism on their records. It's interesting to give that to a crowd of skinheads!

### And you are doing that in a way, too, in terms of offering ideas about animal rights, activism, and veganism.

Yeah, I suppose so. Those ideas came because we were transformed at certain times in our lives, and then you feel compelled to share that transformation with others. Especially when you're younger, you suspect that what compelled you to make a change will immediately compel the rest of the world, once they hear your logic. Of course it never pans out that way! But, that is how, specifically, issue-oriented songs came about, especially concerning animal rights. I am still bewildered and horrified by how people, especially in Western-industrialized societies, treat animals en masse. Lyrics still pop up in songs all of the time about it.

power vacuum in Iraq. That is going to be a problem for whatever comes next. Do you want an international force there to make sure that now a democracy can come about? What do the people there think? Do they want to return to having a Hussein-type person back? ¶ My opinion is so uneducated in terms of being on the ground there, it's almost pointless for me to talk about it except to say that, generally, in terms of talking about torture, if you are going to go that extra mile and humiliate and torture people, you can definitely expect more war and more terrorism to come back here. Violence begets more violence.

**Leo Tolstoy** wrote, "Government is violence." I wonder if that resonates with you?

If we agree on what government is. Historically, that would be true. A government is a concentration of power and as far as I know, anywhere on the planet, all government has been attained by violence. It is violence in the sense that there is a police force that protects the state, that protects stability and security. It is a threat to the populace; "You can't change it or we will blow you away!" That is what the army is for. That is what the police are for. The state is sustained by violence or the threat of violence, the threat of coercion. I would agree with that. ¶ If you changed the word "government" to a "mode of organization," I don't think that modes of organizations between large groups of people are doomed to be authoritarian or violent. If they are, we might as well call it a day right now. But, I am open for something better.

It seems you are making something better at the record label and with your music.

I think that people should think about self-reliance. You started this discussion off with self-reliance. Do what you can to be self-reliant, do what you can to organize yourselves. Because things are going to come to a point where we are all going to have to take care of ourselves. Things are fucking going down the toilet and we are on the edge of extinction if we're not careful. People are going to have to know how to take care of themselves cooperatively. ©

Lately, some writers have been drawing comparisons between Buddhism and punk rock.

Well, I plead ignorance on Buddhism and punk rock. I don't know too much about it. Where we are from (Winnipeg, Canada), as far as I know, there has been a connection between a sort of conservative Christian element and hardcore punk rock. But I haven't really heard of any other couplings since the mid-'80s in the New York hardcore scene. There was a Hare Krishna movement that fizzled out and died in the early '90s. But looking back there were some decent ideas in those records put out by bands that were otherwise considered thugs. It was interesting.

What are your thoughts about bringing the Iraq war to an end, given the almost daily reports that the US government has allegedly been engaging in torture at prisons or sending prisoners to other countries to be tortured in very brutal ways. All of this comes within a context of the president claiming torture is the kind of action that we are going to war to end.

Well . . . [laughs] then you can expect more war. If that's what he wants, then he is going to get it. There are so many ways I could come at this, so many depths to this equation. There are theocratic fascists that are probably trying to step into the



## rat patrol

it's not really about the bikes.

The Rat Patrol is just one of various "bike clubs" scattered throughout the world. They are representative of the various groups of people joining together because they like building useful things from scrap material found in dumpsters. The Rat Patrol, one of the most widely spread of these organizations, even has divisions in Africa and Europe. But after talking to Johnny Payphone, the group's self-proclaimed, Chicago-based ambassador (who heads up the local chapter with Alex Wilson), it's harder to call them just a bike club.

The main focus of the group is building freak bikes. Tall bikes—two bike frames stacked on top of each other—and choppers

are the most common. Yet after walking around their "clubhouse" it's apparent that bike parts aren't the only things they salvage from alleyways. The furniture, the wall decorations, the clothes on a lot of their backs are all removed from someone's trash bin. Their fridge is filled with what the mainstream media has come to call freegan food; vegan, perishable food items they've rescued from dumpsters of restaurants and grocers. And after sitting around with them for a bit, you learn they are out to do more than just build bikes. They encourage members to take part in community betterment.

Interview by Shawna Flavell

### How long have you guys been building bikes?

The mutant bike phenomenon is about 13 years old. In the beginning of the bicycle, nobody had any conception of what the bike looked like or was supposed to look like. So everybody made all sorts of crazy designs, and just sort of settled on a few different designs for different purposes. You know in the '60s and '70s people started getting into really crazy bikes, making choppers and tall bikes, but it just kind of died out. It started up again in the early '90s in Portland and Minneapolis.

**When you scavenge for bike material, what sorts of things are you looking for?**

If you ride your bike around all the time in the alley, you always find stuff and if your bike has the capacity, you bring it home. And then we get together as a group and dig up trash and get stuff [that way]. But bikes come to you in various ways. Some people don't use welding at all and they bolt everything together. Others fabricate everything. There's a guy who rides around on a penny farthing, where the front wheel's made from an old clothing rack. One of our UK branch members rides around on the headboard of a bed he's turned into a bike.

**Would you say that the reason people join Rat Patrol is they feel the need to tinker with things?**

It's not really about the bikes. People who like doing this sort of thing like to tinker with everything in their life. We're a trash club, so whatever we find in the

trash, we use. Bikes just happen to be a form of transportation that's found in the trash. That's why there's all these bike clubs, including outlaw bicycle clubs in the country, because it's a form of transportation that costs you nothing. You find the parts and put them together. ¶ You could think of it as a post-apocalyptic preparation. You want to have control of everything in your life. So you want to be able to hack electronics and repair engines, weld, electric work, wiring, sewing, growing your own food, making alcohol . . . that would be nice. It's more about taking control of your life, conquering fear and taking control of whatever is holding you back from what it is you want to do. The bikes are just a convenient common thread, a way to find people. ¶ Do it yourself instead of buy it yourself: the idea is to try operating without money. Everything in our apartment is found. The furniture, the fabric that covers the walls, all of our patches were printed

on a bolt of fabric we found. There isn't anything wrong specifically with money, but it's just distasteful. Money just really leaves a bad taste in your mouth. So we try to operate without it. We incorporate such a vast range of people: homeowners with families and kids, old guys, young squatter punks. There is somebody somewhere who can help you learn anything you want to know. Everybody has some weird skill.

**So would you consider yourselves an anarchist group?**

There are people in the Rat Patrol who are anarchists, there are others who are just family guys who like riding bikes. I would say we are anarchists in organizations because we don't really exist, we are like the rat. Sneaky and elusive. ¶ The idea is: don't be afraid to do something. If you don't know the last step you can still do the first step and it's very possible someone will know how to do the hard parts. Just start something.

**you could think of it as a post-apocalyptic preparation... you want to be able to hack electronics and repair engines, weld, electric work, wiring, sewing, growing your own food, making alcohol.**



**we are just trying to bring some whimsy back to the streets and make people believe in magic again.**



**You mentioned that some of your other members are involved in Food Not Bombs. Is this something you encourage your members to do and get involved in?**

From an official standpoint, there is no affiliation between the Rat Patrol or any other organization. We encourage people to go out and change the world in whatever way they feel is most efficient or most fun. You have to realize that some of our people squat in warehouses and jump trains, and there are others that go to church. So they are going to do that in different ways. I think that as long as they have this shared idea of having fun, of doing stuff, they are always welcome.

**You guys do have a youth organization, Rat Patrol Junior, right?**

It's important to keep those two clubs legally separate. People join the Rat Patrol any way they want to. For some it means protesting the auto show and some just get drunk and crash parades and that's all you'll ever see them do. Other people like to ride and dig through the garbage and I

think that's the core of it. One of the ways me and Alex Wilson apply this is, he has a shop, we run a kids' program and that program has very strict rules. We try to, figuratively, smack some sense, by letting them know they are riding with the crew and not to act a fool and everyone's going to have a good time. It's on a sponsorship basis. We are trying to provide an alternative, an anti-gang.

**What do you say to people interested in joining the Rat Patrol?**

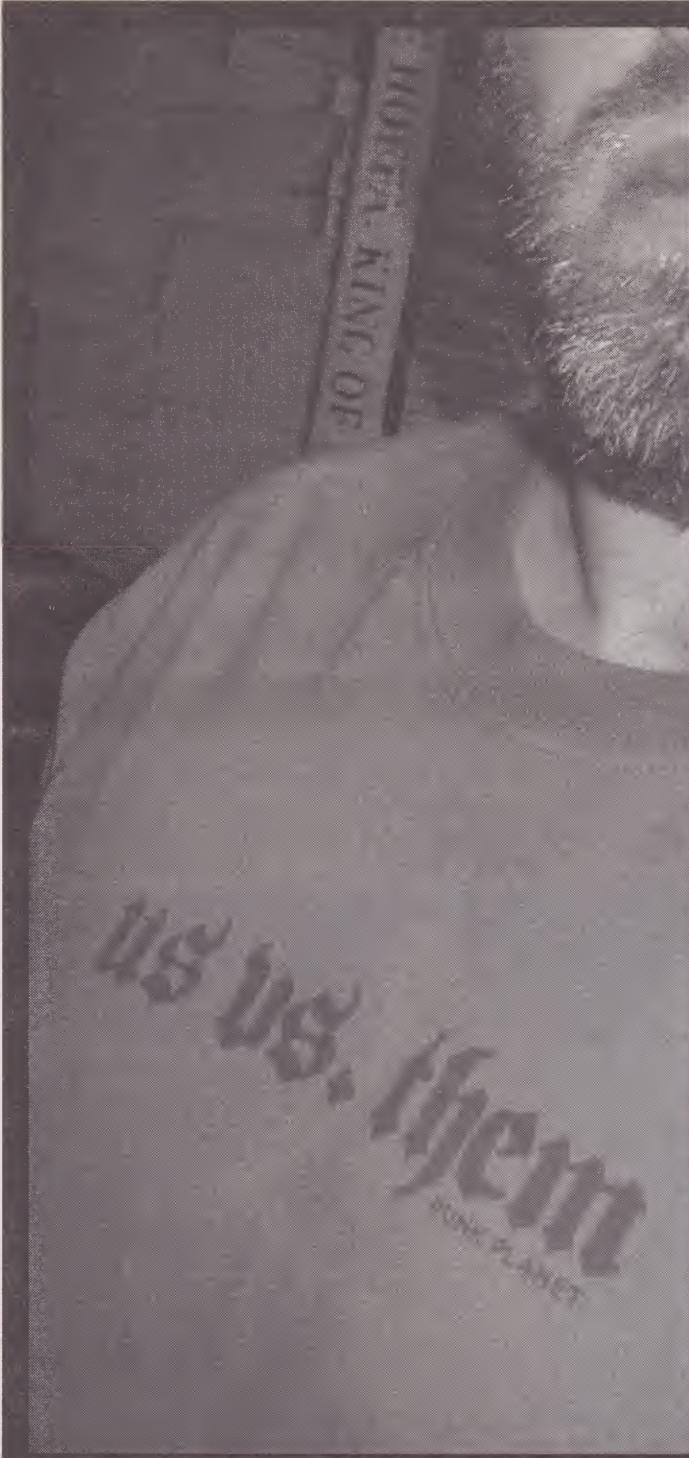
Ideally they sort of already are a tinkering type, but we welcome anybody. When we are riding around we just try to get people to join. We say that if you ride with the Rat Patrol anytime, you are a member of the club. It's very informal, no leaders, no rules, just a few codes of behavior that should be obvious anyway. Remember it's not a bike club; it's a parody of a bike club. Don't take yourself too seriously. Remember to respond to both friendliness and aggressiveness with friendliness, because you always are representing the club when you are riding a crazy bike.

**And what about people who live outside of a metropolis?**

I make up starter packs and anytime anyone sends me an e-mail and asks if they can start their own Rat Patrol, I always say yes, because these things tend to fizzle out and if they get it started all the better to them. I send them zines, stickers, patches, all sorts of things to get them started.

**What goes on during the rides and how often do they happen?**

They happen about once a week and we build about once a month with various people building privately. A build day is a public day where anyone can come, and if they work really hard they can ride out that day on a chopper or a tall bike. This serves as a screen, because if they don't want to do the work themselves, we don't want them to hang with us. Sometimes the rides are called with a purpose in mind. Other times it's just a ride to ride. ¶ We are just trying to bring some whimsy back to the streets and make people believe in magic again. ©



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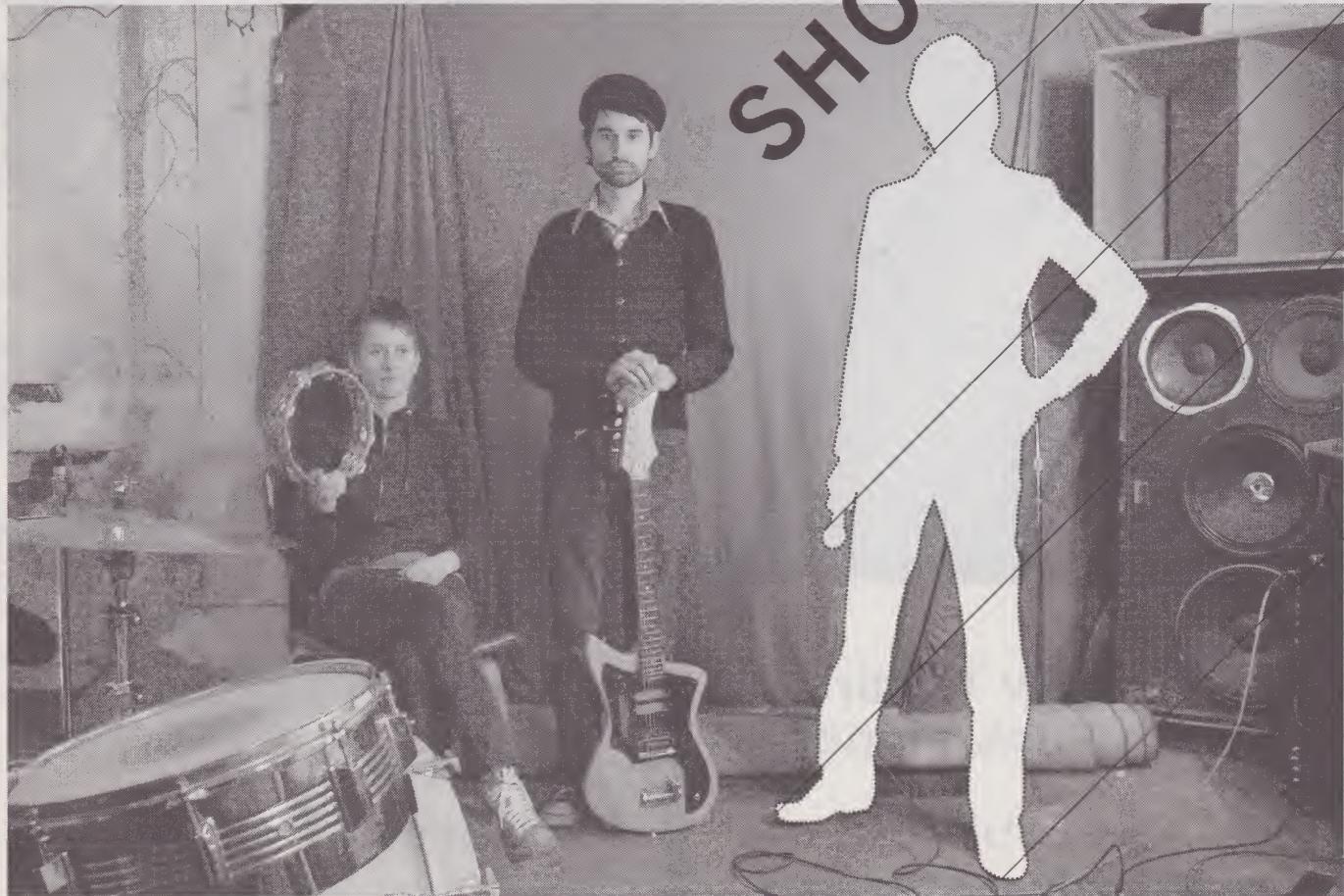
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SHOP LIFTING





**J**ust when it appeared the music scene in Seattle was irredeemably full of scampering twerps in a hustle to get onto major labels and leaving a trail of half-wit lyrics, broken promises, and empty coke baggies along the golden road to their own extended tour bus, voila: here blooms Shoplifting.

It is refreshing—perhaps even a salvation—that Shoplifting exists. It is indeed that rare breed of creature that can interweave lyrics with a melodically and rhythmically compelling song. They create from this combination music balanced in political and literary merit without becoming encumbered by the rabid incoherency of a diatribe yelled by a Larouche campaigner in that city's University District.

Shortly before the release of *Body Stories*, their latest album from Kill Rock Stars, I met with singer/guitarist Chris Pugmire and drummer/singer Hannah Blilie one unusually noisy evening at the Stumbling Monk pub in Seattle. Guitarist Devin Welch was not able to make our interview, and new bassist Mel Lock suffered from the geographical matter of residing in Australia.

A single word came up over and over again in conversation with Pugmire and Blilie about their band. It is not affected or coached into them, and comes from an honestly genteel place: community.

Their notion of community comes through in their live shows. Early concerts in 2003 were undertaken with a well thought-out effort to break the traditional bounds between performer and audience. In the process, they managed to trounce the occasionally lagging gelatin of the live Seattle music scene. Blindfolds were applied to audience members. Shouting call-and-response exercises were undertaken. The band left the height of the stage and its accompanying safety zone and played on ground level, equal with and accessible to their audience. If their set failed, the audience would fail with them. If they succeeded, you would as well.

The members of Shoplifting are idealists. It sounds kind of silly to make such a lofty claim, for I can offer no proof other than what I have observed, but if you knew them, you would probably get the same impression. You may have run into them at the protest—an activity they participate in as a band and as individuals. They were also at the benefit—in fact they may very well have organized it. Instead, they may have stayed home last weekend and read a book or listened to records

(Pugmire doesn't own a CD player), gone dancing in the basement at a friend's potluck, or screwed around with four-tracks and instruments they got at a yard sale rather than schmoozing with scenesters at the hip theme bar on Capital Hill.

Shoplifting actually cares about the people around them. And, as you will see from the transcription of my conversation with Pugmire and Blilie below, they have no intention of stopping.

Interview by Justin Hamacher

**What is punk? Is there an ethos associated with it?**

**Chris Pugmire:** Punk is possibility. People will claim it's dead or attempt to restrict its meaning to style or chords or a particular timeframe, but ultimately to me it means that anyone, regardless of skill level, age, gender, race, sexuality, ability, etcetera, can make any sound they want whenever they want, with whomever they want, on their own terms.

**Can anything released on a major label be punk?**

**Pugmire:** I think so yes. The ability to create on one's own terms and relate ideas on one's own terms is significantly more difficult but it's still possible. Again, to restrict punks inherent possibility to purely economic terms is elitist and falsely invalidates its potential to reach people and inspire them to create on their own terms. Are major labels fucked up? Yes. They're purely designed for profit at the expense of the artist, fan, scene, etc. But that doesn't mean the radical or subversive ideas can't slip through the cracks while the corporation's busy trying to make money. Would I personally sign to a major label? No, but I don't think that anything should automatically be invalidated just because it's associated or financed by something I don't agree with.

**Hannah Blilie:** The indie industry is just as fucked up as the major label industry. And they are so intertwined. Indie doesn't mean independent anymore, it has come to mean more of a sound now.

**Pugmire:** They should just call it wet toast.

**Blilie:** This indie music . . . most of the times the bands are on major labels.

**You never know where the money comes from. We were talking earlier about money which**

comes from a bad source being used for good means. Is that redemptive? How can one sort that out?

Blilie: I don't know. I would never say someone was unethical for being on a major label. So much of it has to do with where you are coming from, and how much control you have, and, you know, if you are struggling to play music for years and years and suddenly someone offers you tons of money, I could understand the temptation. I wouldn't want to argue with someone on a punk level about major-label shit. For me, it's more about the type of atmosphere you have to deal with when you enter into that world, the type of people you have to talk to . . .

**People telling you what to do, being bossy and schmoozy . . .**

Blilie: Yeah and the marketing, you know. "Hannah, your hair would look better if we put a little blond in there and spike the side out here—can we see a little leg?"

Blilie: It is so image-oriented. It is disgusting.

**OK, so let's be philosophical, get away from image and talk about truth. Name something that is true.**

Pugmire: Earth is at the precipice of collapse, with entire peoples, species, and ecosystems facing extinction because of the insane logic and morality of a minority of people who hold a lot of power.

**Name something that is false.**

Pugmire: Nothing can be done about it.

**Chris, many of your lyrics are centered around sexual politics and community issues. How do you put your mind and energy to politics and community issues offstage?**

Pugmire: Devin was in the Infernal Noise Brigade (INB) for six months or a year and played with them at the Republican National Convention protests.

**He was arrested for that?**

Pugmire: Yes he was. The cops arrested an entire block of protesters that the INB happened to be in. He was thrown in a big warehouse at the piers and was there for two or three days—I can't remember. We had to cancel a show and he was pretty shaken up. The day before he went to jail, all of our



guitars and drum hardware were stolen. Wack. ¶ Also I helped organize and participate in a seminar focusing on political issues with prisoners in Shelton for two years. I helped organize the Seattle chapter of Bands Against Bush. Hannah, Devin, and I have worked on accountability processes with both survivors and perpetrators of sexual violence and have done community organizing around that topic. I've also spoken on a couple of panels and organized public forums on the topic of community accountability and sexual violence. The band has both played and organized benefit shows for CARA (Communities Against Rape and Abuse), NW Network (Support for Queer Survivors of Abuse), Home Alive, Safe Place in Olympia, the Olympia Gender Variant Health Care Project, the Vera Project, and others.

**What are your plans for next year?**

Pugmire: People have talked about bringing us out to Australia, it just depends on if we can do it without going into debt.

Blilie: Most of it is money holding us back. There is interest there, but we would have to get it funded.

Pugmire: 'Cause we are all poor.

Blilie: We are a broke-ass band.

**Being in a band, you can wield an immense amount of power. What responsibility does a band have to an audience? To a younger audience? To a non-responsive audience? To jerks in an audience?**

Pugmire: Everyone in a show environment is equally responsible for each other. If someone is being harassed or assaulted then the audience is as responsible as the band to put a stop to it. The only added responsibility on a band is that they have the visibility of a stage and a microphone that can be heard by everyone. So if they see anything fucked up happening they had better use that visibility and that microphone to make everyone else aware of the collective responsibility for everyone's safety. In terms of power, because of that increased visibility and the fact that they are louder than anyone else in the room, their responsibility is to not abuse their power. Offstage too. People in bands have the responsibility to not take advantage of other people because of their—perceived or real—increased social standing.

**Kind of a tangent, but speaking of responsibilities: Shoplifting, what are your thoughts on theft?**

Pugmire: When it's deprived individuals or groups taking back what resources

I WOULDN'T WANT TO ARGUE WITH SOMEONE ON  
A PUNK LEVEL ABOUT MAJOR-LABEL SHIT.



institutions control, it's completely justified. When it's institutions stealing from people, from animals, from the land, then it's not remotely justifiable.

#### What about violence against property?

Pugmire: I think violence can only be perpetrated against living creatures. Property is not alive. The destruction of habitat and the environment is definitely violence but are those really "owned"? If you believe in the legality of institutions then sure, but I don't. Also, the phrase "violence against property" is typically used by governments or corporations or the wealthy to justify violence against people resisting their oppression. Not by people (or other species) whose ability to survive is destroyed, being destroyed or under constant threat of destruction by said institutions. That phrase is another dirty trick used by those who exploit language for purposes of domination.

You recorded *Body Stories* at SoundHouse with Steve Fisk.

Blilie: Yeah, he is like 50, but so fucking punk . . .

Pugmire: Very kind and open.

Blilie: He is a tall big dude with glasses and curly hair, plain clothes, he has a pug.

**One of your bandmembers, Mel Lock, lives in Australia. That's got to be kind of hard. How do you make it work?**

Pugmire: We have talked about it. Well, before she came over, before we recorded with her, we sent her just four-track and live stuff, just practice stuff, but we forgot to tell her that everything was tuned a half-step down, so she kept getting really messed up.

Blilie: Yeah, she came with an idea of what everything was and then it wound up being totally different. Our tunings are so weird . . .

#### How do you guys tune?

Pugmire: Whatever Devin does.

Blilie: It makes orthodox tuning total impossible. You can have one reference note, but everything else is totally fucked.

Pugmire: Even when we are in quote-unquote standard tuning, it is not standard tuning because the bass is tuned a little bit lower.

Blilie: It was interesting when we were recording talking to Steve about the arrangements, you know, because for vocals it has always been kind of a challenge to have consistency with the music, to try to do melodic things in music that is oftentimes very atonal and not consistent every time, so, it was reassuring, because Steve was like, "Yeah, that totally works, it's really weird, but it works."

Pugmire: He kept saying that all our harmonies and stuff were Russian, weird sevenths or something.

Blilie: He knows music theory really well, and none of us have a fuckin clue, you know, so we'd be like, "That sounds kind of right, but we're not really sure." For me it was really nice [for him] to be like, "Yeah, that was right, it is fucked up and atonal, but it is correct." So, that was validating for me cause often times I am like, "Ugh, does that match the key?"

I have noticed in many of your songs that when everything is falling apart—all the instruments

clashing in vectors away from one another—there will always be one element that will move into the front and provide a horizon line. A voice will come in, or the drums will instead go into a very straight beat if the guitars and voice were mercilessly berzerking all over the place. Is this always conscious?

Pugmire: It is all natural. Mainly we write as we play, and before we record it, things totally always change.

Blilie: Those songs probably went through like 10 different versions.

**How do you guys write? Does someone come with an idea and everyone sits down and adds stuff?**

Pugmire: Barely.

Blilie: Sometimes there will be a vocal melody, or Devin will come in with a guitar part, but most of the time it is collaborative.

Pugmire: Sometimes I will have a bunch of prewritten lyrics and then be like, these lyrics fit the beat of this song we have been working on.

**This new album has a sense of pursuit. There is a quickened anxiety to it.**

Pugmire: We are being pursued or we are pursuing? ¶ When we wrote these songs we were trying really hard consciously not to repeat ourselves and write songs like we had. Also this album was just written by the three of us after our first bassist Michelle left. Devin and I started playing with odd equipment.

Blilie: We decided to have more of a propulsive mood to the songs. A good pace.

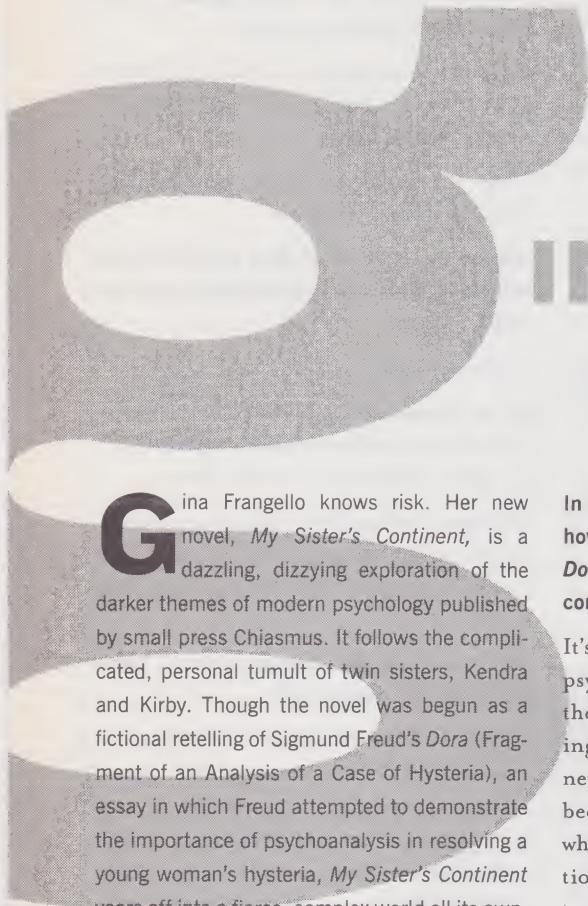
Pugmire: We did not want it to be heavy or depressing though.

Blilie: A lot of the older stuff came out of a pretty dark place.

#### Do you want to talk about that at all?

Blilie: I would just say that we have done a lot of healing in the past three years. The new record reflects that. There is some serious stuff talked about on the new record but it comes from a much more redemptive place.

Pugmire: We wanted to feel like we could play these songs when we weren't in a heavy mood. Sometimes it is good to go to that place, but not all the time. ☺



# INA FRANGELLO

Gina Frangello knows risk. Her new novel, *My Sister's Continent*, is a dazzling, dizzying exploration of the darker themes of modern psychology published by small press Chiasmus. It follows the complicated, personal tumult of twin sisters, Kendra and Kirby. Though the novel was begun as a fictional retelling of Sigmund Freud's *Dora* (Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria), an essay in which Freud attempted to demonstrate the importance of psychoanalysis in resolving a young woman's hysteria, *My Sister's Continent* veers off into a fierce, complex world all its own. Kirby, the book's narrator, tries to understand the disappearance of her twin Kendra, using her missing sister's journal and the case study the family's psychotherapist has written. Bold and intelligent, the book challenges and criticizes psychotherapy with irreverent humor and honest depictions of the complications of adult sexuality. Beyond her work as a novelist, Gina Frangello is also an editor at *Other Voices* magazine, one of the most stellar, uncompromising literary journals currently printed. Most recently, Frangello has helped create Other Voices Books, an independent press focusing solely on publishing short story collections, which, because of the difficulty in marketing and usually modest returns, most corporate publishers and small presses shamelessly avoid, a move certainly as bold as her most recent fiction.

Interview by Joe Meno

In the book's preface, you talk a little about how you were first drawn to fictionalize Freud's *Dora*. How did this idea of exploring hysteria come about?

It's weird because I have a background in psych—I majored in it as an undergrad and then got a master's in counseling before going back to grad school in English—but I'd never read the *Dora* case. I sought it out because of an interest in literary theory in which French feminists reduced the notion of "hysteria" and other mental illness to a symbol of something smart, something which rebellious women of the Victorian era did to thwart the patriarchy—ignoring the sense that hysteria was a real psychological syndrome that caused a lot of women a great deal of both physical and emotional pain. These theorists liked to equate hysteria as something done to defy the patriarchal order, which made for fun reading if you were an imaginative feminist graduate student, but it rang false on some levels too. Hysterics like *Dora* suffered from incredibly debilitating physical symptoms, and while these may have been symptoms of their rage, it was they, the women, who were suffering—they weren't bringing down the patriarchy. ¶ When I finally read more about *Dora*, I saw that despite having terminated her therapy with Freud, she was actually quite proud to have been written about by him. I learned also that her

symptoms only grew worse later in her life and she died fairly early, a bitter, pitiable woman who never at all learned to direct her anger toward any kind of rebellion, but just made herself sick and alienated. A lot of literary theorists had written about *Dora* already—Cixous even wrote a play, *Portrait of Dora*, which was fascinating—but I couldn't shake the feeling that these brilliant contemporary intellectuals were distorting the hysterics in order to appropriate them, use them for their own ends. Women like *Dora*—whose real name was Ida Bauer—weren't even remotely feminist warriors, however well they served later as illustrations of the ways oppression destroyed many intelligent, promising women. ¶ I should add that in my life as a therapist, I had worked almost exclusively with battered women, incest survivors and girls with eating disorders, and I saw these women, much more than intellectual powerhouse feminists, as the heirs of the hysterics, who continue to be marginalized in society. I'd seen a lot of abuse against women, a lot of sexual violence in my youth and that made me interested in this population as a counselor. I think I wanted to merge some of the things I'd witnessed in real life with the fascinating, provocative ideas I was reading about in literary theory and psychoanalysis. I also wanted to do it in a contemporary setting, where there were more avenues available to women who, although damaged and suffer-

ONE EDITOR SAID SHE HAD TO KEEP PUTTING THE NOVEL DOWN AND LEAVING THE ROOM BECAUSE IT WAS SO DISTURBING



ing, also might want to strike back and tell their own stories. And I was already writing stories about this on-the-edge young woman, Kendra, who had had an affair with her father's best friend—just like in the Dora case study—and whose father was a philanderer like Dora's father. There was a distant mother who was out of touch with reality. There were all these parallels and I just decided to start chasing them, mixing them up, to see what happened. I think the most surprising factor for me was deciding to have two separate women—identical twins Kendra and Kirby—represent the heterosexual and lesbian sides of Dora, as well as the self-destructive side juxtaposed against a side that might find some actual power.

**In your opinion, how does Freud or the notion of psychotherapy affect how we go about our lives some 100 years after his theories? Does it oversimplify the complexities of human behavior in some ways or is it still valid?**

I think most people regard many, many aspects of Freudian theory as passe now, and I'm not much different. But when you think about things that were really unnamed before Freud, like the idea of the unconscious, it's sort of hard to imagine how people had a language for their deepest fears or desires before Freud. It seems so obvious to most people now that we often act for reasons we're not fully aware of, or want things we deny to ourselves that we want, and that

these desires may be expressed in things like fantasies or dreams or just inexplicable behaviors or psychological symptoms. But before Freud, that wasn't obvious to people at all. I mean, you can see intuitive awareness by brilliant minds throughout history, such as in the work of Shakespeare—but Freud was one of a group of thinkers in the early 20th century who began supplying a cultural language for the complex life of the mind. He was also innovative in his theories of sexuality. ¶ Freud can be seen as a misogynist in the same sense that a writer like William Faulkner can be seen as a racist—he was a product of his time. In some ways, for his time, he was a liberator of women, to the limited degree he could imagine. But in the end he was limited by time, as we're all limited by our place in history. He may also have been limited by his desire for acceptance—there's been such great debate as to whether he originally believed his patients' reports of sexual molestation but later changed his mind and developed more Oedipal theories in order to make his ideas palatable to male, Victorian intellectuals. Some scholars say that's not how it happened, but whatever his motivations, Freud definitely turned his back on the reports of his patients and made it so that sexual abuse was a thing not to be believed. He took many of his ideas of the unconscious too far, convincing himself and others of fairly far-fetched things—not only that children

desired their parents sexually, but that they would literally believe a sexual act had taken place when it hadn't, based on their own desire—which seems a demented position to hold and even more far-fetched that it was taken so seriously for more than 50 years. That damaged many real lives. Psychoanalysis, like anything else, any other kind of theory, can go too far, can be destructive if taken as gospel.

**At the heart of the story, twin sisters Kirby and Kendra share a very conflictual relationship. How did you begin to create this striking dynamic?**

Well, I lived with identical twins for several years in college, and that dynamic made me fascinated by twinship. I should stipulate—and this isn't just a disclaimer—that the twins I lived with were nothing like Kirby and Kendra in any way, that those characters were based on entirely other inspirations. But the twin dynamic *was* compelling to me—the symbiotic contentiousness, and the competitiveness, and the almost obsessive closeness. I was fascinated by the idea of what happens to one twin when abandoned, for whatever reason, by the other. And twins served well symbolically for the dialogue I was trying to create in the novel between classic psychoanalysis and the later, New-Agey theories of repressed memories and victimhood. I could play the twins off

## WHEN YOU WORK FOR FREE AND AGAINST GREAT CORPORATE-DRIVEN ODDS, YOU HAVE TO LOVE THE BOOKS YOU PUBLISH WHOLLY AND TOTALLY.

each other, off the ideas I wanted to address, but also they had this very real, sisterly relationship that went beyond being mouthpieces for certain ideologies.

**The book is very frank in its depiction of sexuality—what issues of self-censorship did you have to overcome to write the more explicit scenes in the book?**

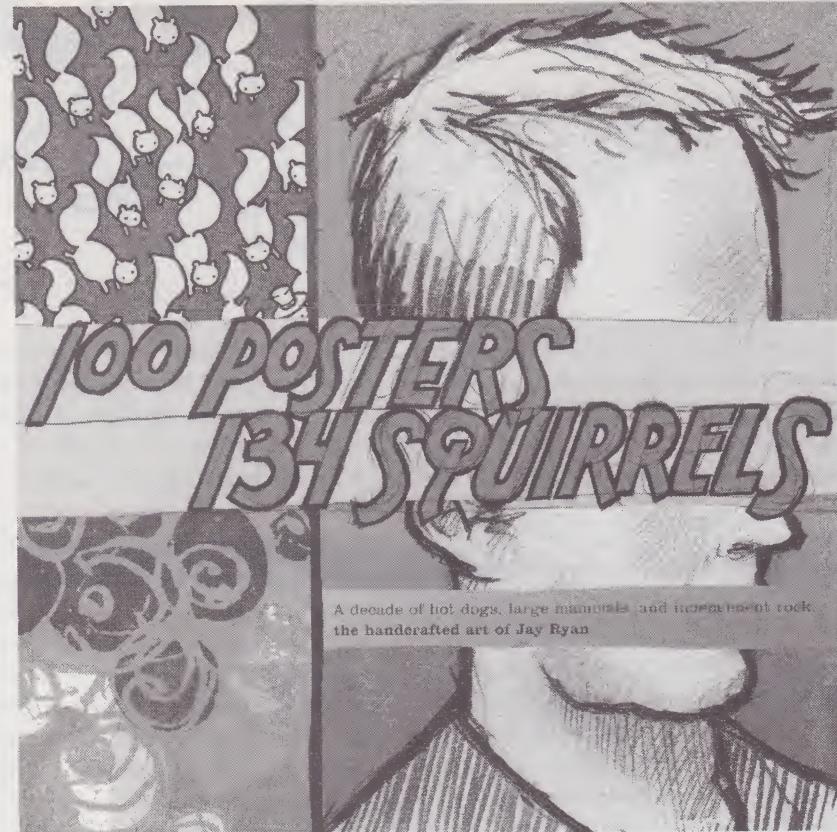
To be honest, I was a lot, lot more concerned with whether or not publishers were going to censor the novel than I was with self-censorship. That turned out not to be an entirely paranoid fear—when my agent submitted the novel to the “big” publishing houses, we had some really extreme responses. One editor said she had to keep putting the novel down and leaving the room because it was so disturbing—an other allegedly said he couldn’t explain the novel to a marketing rep without blushing or breaking down. In the end, I felt lucky to find an editor at Chiasmus where this wasn’t an issue at all. ¶ The sexuality in the novel felt very organic to me—it would have been difficult for me to attempt to tell this particular story without those themes. My new novel has very little sex in it, but in this particular story it seemed that sex—preferences, practices, the exploration of power—was an integral part of the character development. When Kendra and Michael are in an S/M scene, to me it was like a conversation. Kirby’s slow realization that she doesn’t really feel sexually towards men, and then her more disturbing realization that she identifies sexually more with Michael or her father than she does with her sister despite the dark implications of that, seemed inextricable from the characters’ larger psychological demons or drives. I mean, Freud was a very sexually obsessed guy. He was interested in why some people are attracted to members of the same sex; he was interested in bondage and beating fantasies; he was interested in what happens when parent and child dynamics possess a sexual undertone. He may have been wrong about why these things happen, but these issues obsessed his work. ¶ That said, *My Sister’s Continent* is a longish novel and the sexually

explicit scenes are actually very few. Even some of the kinky themes, I guess you’d say, are often not very graphic in the actual language. The law office chapter near the very end is a very explicit and long scene, but most of the others are more alluded to than painstakingly depicted. There’s not a lot of discussion of where the genitals go, so to speak. The sex in this novel is psychologically driven for the most part, not physically driven. But it’s important to the work. A friend of mine, the novelist CW Cannon (*Soul Resin*), who was quite a sexual adventurer at that time, told me on reading the novel that it made him never want to have sex again, which was one of the best compliments I ever got about my writing. I’ve also had some very independent, sophisticated women tell me that they felt turned on by the sex scenes even though they felt they “shouldn’t be,” and that was equally gratifying. Like everything else in this novel, I wanted the sexuality to be open to individual interpretation, where it could elicit radically different responses in different readers.

**Besides publishing your first novel, you’re also the editor of *Other Voices* magazine and *Other Voices Books*, two publishing entities dedicated to independent thought and literature. Why did you begin OV Books?**

OV Books is, at least at this point, solely dedicated to short story collections because of the really huge move away from short fiction books by the corporate publishing houses. Running *Other Voices* magazine, I started feeling amazed at how many talented writers who were regularly publishing short stories in the lit mags, even winning awards for their work, were calling or writing to tell us that they couldn’t find an agent to rep their collections, or that agents and editors kept telling them, “This is great—call me when you have a novel,” and basically were unwilling to even try to sell collections in the mainstream market. ¶ Many collections that do get published by big houses have a novel-in-stories vibe going on, where even if the writer is dedicated to short fiction, the book can in part be marketed as a novel. It seemed there were fewer and fewer classic “short story col-

lections,” where the stories are all different, about different people, where there’s not an easy marketing angle and the book can’t be summed up in a sentence or two in a press release. The market has gotten very narrow. Short stories are increasingly being viewed as just a stepping stone to novel-writing, whereas in reality for many writers—not all but many—they are very different beasts, and excelling at one doesn’t necessarily even indicate interest in the other. OV Books, while we’re not aiming to compete with HarperCollins or whatever on a distribution or marketing level, has as its mission providing a home for short story writers and readers, and keeping the classic short story collection alive in our own small way. I think there are other indie presses with very similar missions, and I think there is room for more, too. We’ve had great success with our first title, *Simplify* by Tod Goldberg, which actually went into a second printing before the book was even officially released. Tod’s very connected in the blogging community and has helped promote his own work, which as you know, is invaluable in terms of a book’s success. Because OV Books publishes only one title per year, we’re also able to give all our attention, marketing-wise, to a single author that year, and in this sense we found we could actually do a lot more for *Simplify* than is traditionally expected from a new independent press. We lived and breathed *Simplify*, and we were willing to spend every cent we could afford on it. ¶ Like *Other Voices* magazine, OV Books is a labor of love for the editors. When you work for free and against great corporate-driven odds, you have to love the books you publish wholly and totally. That’s a luxury that the huge conglomerate publishers often can’t afford anymore, when it’s all about stock holders and bottom-line profits. We know we’re not going to get rich. We’re aiming to publish what astounds us and makes us believe, and to give one writer a year a kick-ass publishing experience that belies all the shitty stories. And with one book under our belts, I can actually say I think we’re really succeeding. ☺



"Jay Ryan's genius is in having the image matter." —Steve Albini

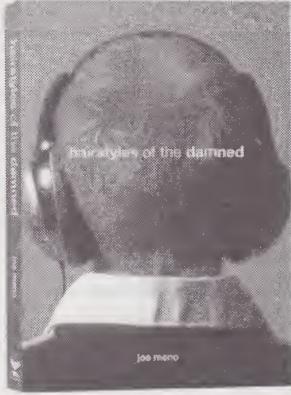
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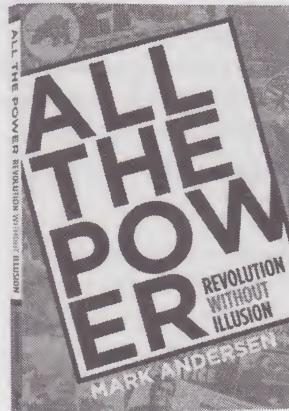
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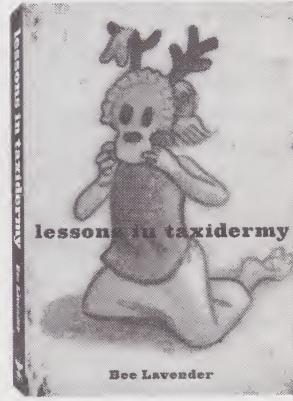
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# DEATH FROM

**W**hen one considers the key ingredients in a rock band, the guitar usually springs to mind. Not so for the Toronto-based duo Death from Above 1979, who create their distortion-laden wall-of-sound with just a bass, drums, and vocals. Their music is a melange of lascivious metal and post-punk charged beats. From the first song on the album to the last, they showcase their penchant for songs on women and sex with omnipotent and non-stop discordant sounds that never become too gnarly or grating.

Bassist Jesse Keeler and drummer/vocalist Sebastien Grainger started the band in 2001 and released the EP *Heads Up!* in 2002. It wasn't until late 2004 with the release of their first full-length, *You're a Woman, I'm a Machine*, when the band started to gain momentum and press. Not all of that press was positive, though: James Murphy, head of DFA Records and electronic band LCD Soundsystem slapped the group with a copyright lawsuit, so the band quickly added the "1979" to their name to avoid further action.

Jesse Keeler recently spoke to me via phone from his home base on varied topics from Socialism in Canada, the waning of touring, to how someone can successfully pursue a creative career.

Interview by Garin Pirnia

#### What inspires you to write a song?

I'm inspired by people dancing. I'm not inspired by emotional events. I don't have something shitty happen to me and go write a bass line about it. I don't deal with things like that. The most inspiring thing for me is to be in a nightclub, not at a show. I don't go to shows ever. The beautiful thing about the nightclub is that there's no band to look at. You just listen to the music and take it for what it is. You don't care how it was made or if their gear looks cool, or if they look good doing it, and it always sounds great 'cause it's

recorded. To dance, you have to feel something from the music and so I just see this dance floor in my head and I imagine making a record with those people dancing to and it just works backwards from that.

#### Do you like to tour?

I guess I must or else I wouldn't keep doing it; but when I'm doing it, I don't think consciously, "Wow, I am enjoying this." But I don't really have a perspective on it one way or the other because it's my job. How do McDonald's employees feel about flipping burgers? Do you hate it? If you hate it so much, then stop doing it. Touring is a lot of work. It's more work than it is fun because you're really only playing for an hour a day and the rest of the 23 hours are most likely spent doing something uncomfortable. The general populace doesn't live its life on the road in a rambling, somewhat transient way, so I don't think people understand touring unless it is their life.

#### Do you think you might miss it if you took time away from it?

No, I think you just get used to whatever circumstance your life is. I think you get accustomed to it and it becomes normal and it's not an event anymore. Every time I haven't done something before, I get excited. Before I'd ever toured Japan, I was excited about it, but now I've been to Japan three times, so it's like, "What are you doing?" "Oh, I'm going to Japan." It's no big deal—the initial thrill is gone. It's still enjoyable to travel around, but it's very draining to never have any of your own space in the world other than a suitcase.

**There seems to be a lot of quality bands emerging from Canada lately: Is there something about Canada or its mentality or sensibility that breeds interesting music?**

There's always been great music coming out of Canada. I think all the bands that you are probably thinking about when you asked that question are people who have hired better press agents than they ever had before. A lot of people in Canada forget about the rest of the world. But as of late, a lot of bands are like, "Shit, we've gotta hire someone in the States to do our PR, we need to hire someone in England, we need to work with someone with international ideas or else our music will never leave our cities." It's happened en masse and a lot of people are helping each other by sharing connections. ¶ Canada is slowly coming out of a weird cycle that started when we first introduced healthcare. We can talk about it for a long time, but basically what happened was Canada at some point in the last 35 years became this weird country that decided to exist off everyone else and not produce on its own. All the factories in Canada are making American products or products for the rest of the world. Where is the Canadian stuff? Why aren't those the big factories? Why isn't Canada's dollar the same as America's? Why do we have to keep our dollar rate high and interest rates low? Why do we have to trick people into coming into our country? Traditionally, there's nothing wrong with us, it's just in the way Canada views itself. ¶ I think it's also linked to Socialism. It isn't a system that rewards people for wanting to better themselves. You want to better the *whole*, which is great and pretty and it's a wonderful idea in a family or commune, but for a country it doesn't really work out. What happens is your ideas sort of die and wither because bands can't continue on if they aren't making any money. I think there's a change happening in the Canadian mindset now though.

# ABOVE 1975



**"I just see this dance floor in my head and I imagine making a record with those people dancing to and it just works backwards from that."**

What kind of advice would you give to a struggling artist who wanted to do something creative with their life?

You have to have an idea of what you want to do before you can go out and do it. You have to make some decisions about yourself. Once you figure out if you have an aptitude for something, that's what you should be working on. If you're really serious, then you gotta sacrifice at the expense of everything else or it'll never work. In creative fields, everyone has a one in a thousand or one in a million chance of having anything go well or having anyone be interested in what you're doing. You have to not be discouraged, but also understand when we really talk about success, when we say a "succ-

cessful" actor or actress, whatever the term is, we're really talking about someone who is getting paid well, or working a lot. By working a lot, there is a business aspect to it. We don't say someone is successful when they are really good at something; we gauge our own personal success by if we can do it for an occupation. There are so many people who are so much better at playing guitar than anyone you'll ever hear on MTV. There are millions of them. They are the guys you see in the guitar stores and they shred and play so good by themselves, but they make no money doing it. They buy all these little gadgets to entertain themselves and they're making music, but it's a different mindset that makes it into an occupa-

tion. It's a totally different way of looking at what you're doing.

**So then why is art important?**

I don't think art is important. Artists make art because they have to and musicians make music because they have to. It's in them and it's got to come out some way. I don't think that it's important—it's just like eating and shitting and wearing clothes when it's winter. It's just something we do.

**Is that why you do what you do—because it's a natural instinct?**

Yeah, it's just what I do. Admitting that you're a musician to yourself is a difficult thing to do because it shows the rest of the world that you're saying you're probably a bum. ☺



## JULIE DOUCET

I SPENT 12 YEARS DRAWING COMICS AND ONLY COMICS, NOT EVEN A SKETCHBOOK. IT WAS JUST NO FUN ANYMORE.

**A**sk most people to name the greatest working female cartoonist, and they'll reply, "Julie Doucet." They're wrong—Doucet stopped cartooning close to seven years ago—but their hearts are in the right place. Her comics are uniquely expressive, immediately recognizable, and provide instant, easy access to a compelling moment in history. Perhaps unfortunately, the greatest female cartoonist description follows her around US cartooning circles today. Ask most people to name the greatest working cartoonists, and you might hear Robert Crumb, Harvey Pekar, Peter Bagge—men to whom Doucet's work has often been compared. It is only when you add in the issue of gender that her work receives the recognition it is due.

This is partially because Doucet's comics, rooted in autobiography, are uniquely feminine—and by that I do not mean frilly, pretty,

or giggly. They are dark and rough and bloody. They depict drug use, psychosis, cutting, sex, and even motherhood as visceral, bodily experiences replete with complexities and deep emotional tolls. Also they are hilarious. Created in the unbordered, barely definable milieu of the Riot Girl movement, her 12-issue *Dirty Plotte* series captured Fuck You, Fuck Me Feminism in a manner only rivaled by the slip-dress/Doc Martens outfit pairing.

The wildest and most prescient of these *Dirty Plotte* strips were always the dream sequences. In these, Julie-the-character was constantly enacting the fantasies of my generation: to meet Mickey Dolenz and Nick Cave; to have a penis, just for a little while, to see what it was like; to birth a baby that was actually a pet kitty; to experience the life of a shoot-'em-up cowboy; to masturbate on a space ship; and to be handed someone else's cut-off penis, just for a little while,

to see what *that* was like. These stories were originally collected into *My Most Secret Desire* in 1995, and the recent reprinting of this collection, in April of 2006, serves to remind readers how ahead of its time Doucet's comics were.

Foretelling the recent hot-topic issues of gender dysphoria and cutting, *Dirty Plotte*—regrettably, the Canadian artist's only major contribution to the medium—even earned Julie-the-cartoonist a spot in the 1999 Le Tigre song "Hot Topic." Alongside artists as diverse as Yoko Ono, Faith Ringgold, Gertrude Stein, Carolee Schneeman, Angela Davis, Dorothy Allison, and Joan Jett, Julie Doucet is honored as one of our most beloved cultural revolutionaries, even as the media proclaim the death of feminism. "You're getting old that's what they say but / Don't give a damn I'm listening anyway," Kathleen Hanna sings, underscoring that, while the days of a comprehensive women's movement

may be past, the vital work of individual women still demands our explicit attention.

It is in this context that Doucet's comics must be viewed. (And really, they *must* be viewed.) Sure, the work fits into a feminist movement—quite easily, in fact, even despite her protestation that her aims were never specifically feminist—but it also explores more resounding artistic questions. “How important is physical health to art?” her comics ask, and, “Do successful portrayals of sexuality rely on the gender of either the artist or the main character?”, and “How important is success, if it impedes personal happiness?” Like the questions raised by the work of Gertrude Stein, Angela Davis, and Joan Jett, these are universal concerns, not feminist ones. And so we come to the second reason most people are wrong when they proclaim Julie Doucet the greatest working female cartoonist: because she was simply one of the great cartoonists. No further description necessary.

Yet the reasons Doucet left cartooning are not widely discussed, probably because the isolation she felt in the field, partially due to being a woman in the masculine world of comics, may be a point of shame for other cartoonists. But also, she's fairly shy, a pretty, quiet-voiced, French Canadian-accented woman not quite as bold as her linework (and with hair not quite as messy). Moreover, she's left cartooning for the less nerdy and more gender-aware environs of the general art world, and she's happy there. She's also successful, in part because her cartooning past gives her current work a strong narrative and autobiographical root people seem drawn to.

Doucet spoke with me over the telephone on the eve of the rerelease of *My Most Secret Desire* by Drawn & Quarterly, the Montreal-based comics publisher that got its start by putting out Doucet's work. For the most part, we limited our conversation to comics, which may seem a strange choice since she no longer works in the field. However, she's profoundly influenced by her experiences with the medium, remains a strong influence in it, and as you will see, still makes a living from it. She just isn't going to go back. I was honored that she opened up to me about her former work and current passion.

Julie Doucet won't be lured back into drawing more comics—why would she be? Her recent work is too compelling, and she loves doing it—but those of us who still work in the field can still learn from the experiences she had while she was there.

Interview by Anne Elizabeth Moore

**As I was rereading *Dirty Plotte* the other night, I realized that we had corresponded in the mid-'90s. I came across a note you'd written in one of my books: "Anne, This is the one I was telling you about. Julie."**

That's funny. Were you drawing comics or anything like that?

**I was not, but I was reading them voraciously: everything by you, Chester Brown, Ellen Forney, Peter Bagge, Mary Fleener. But you aren't drawing comics anymore.**

No, it's been almost seven years. Six years and a half.

**What was the last comics work you published?**

*The Madame Paul Affair*. That was the last thing I did pretty much. It was running in the newspaper. And the last of it was published in November '99, something like that.

**Do you miss anything about it, or are you simply glad to be done?**

Oh, I'm glad. I'm so glad. I was sick of it, I mean, it took me three years to find a way to get out of it. Because I was making just enough money to be able to live, but not enough to be able to take a break. You know, I spent [exasperated sigh] 12 years drawing comics and only comics, not even a sketchbook. So I'd be working like a dog all the time. And it was just no fun

anymore. And the crowd, it started to drain. I couldn't take it anymore.

**Your particular fans, or the readership of comics in general?**

Oh, no no. It's about—it was like an all-boys crowd. Which I was really comfortable with when I started. But then it changed. I guess I changed. You know, all they talk about is comics, comics, comics. And they are not interested much in anything else. Not very open-minded, I feel. I had enough of the comics-nerd attitude.

**Hmmm. I've experienced that, too.**

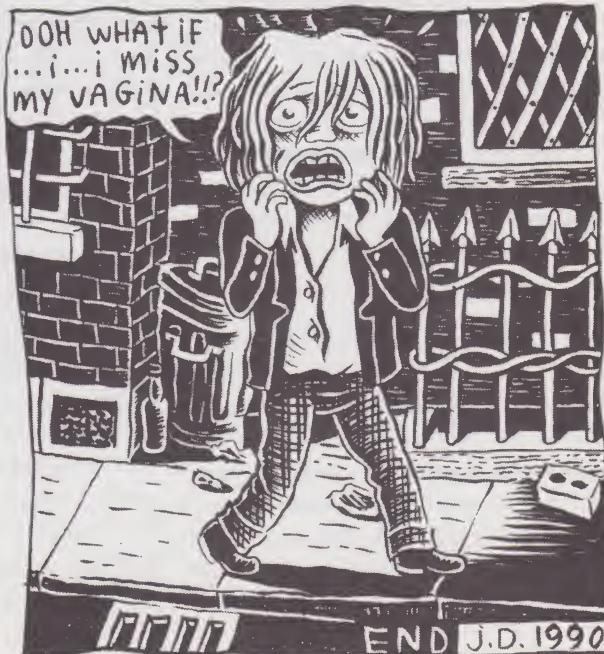
So I'm not crazy? I don't think I suffered from sexism, like I never had problems to be published or anything like that. Was I being paid less? Who knows—certainly not by Drawn & Quarterly.

**Then how did the all-boys crowd come to affect you?**

Most of my problems came from the love relationships, the fact that I was the successful one. Since I was in a men's world it took me quite a long time to get to talk about that with other women who had the same type of experiences. I can tell you, that really poisoned my life. And in a way that is what I am most resentful of, when I think back, of those comics years.

**And what have you been working on since?**

## IT WAS LIKE AN ALL-BOYS CROWD.



THE CUTTING STUFF . . . THERE WERE QUITE A LOT OF PEOPLE DOING THAT AROUND THE SAME TIME.



I'm mostly writing now. When I quit comics I became a member of a printing studio. My specialty at the university was printing, and then when I quit the university I never ever thought about it again, until now. And so, when I quit comics and I did my first print, I was completely shocked. It felt like, "That's what I was supposed to do all that time." So I did *Melek*, a linocut book, and the *Long Time Relationship* book. And then I did some screenprinting, objects and books. Mostly variable experiments. Collages. A lot of collages. I write with—I cut out words in magazines and I have been writing small text parts to go under the collage. Then I wrote my autobiography from zero to 15 years old with cut-out words.

#### Has that been published?

Yes, It's 208 pages, it's been published in France. That is a really funny one. The way I did it was, I had a general idea of what I wanted to say, then I'd look around in old magazines for the words that could express what I had in mind. Or segments of sentences. I'd use old French '60s magazines, *Elle*, *Paris Match* . . . because the typography is more interesting, and the vocabulary more

colorful . . . Now I'm writing poetry with cut-out words. Bad love poems. [Both laugh.] Yeah, they are pretty funny. Very cynical, but cynical and funny. All in French . . . I am sorry, French is my first language! ¶ So I've been doing a little papier-mache sculpture and woodcuts. So, I've been doing quite a lot of things, in the past seven years. There is also the journal project. It comes very close to comics. For one year, I drew/wrote one page per day. Comics people would say, "Oh, this is not comics." But modern art people would say, "Oh, this is comics." I didn't feel I was drawing comics when I did it. Probably because I intended to do something closer to a sketchbook. No penciling, lots of texts, and no narration between the images.

#### Is this how you are making a living?

Well no. It's very, very ironic. I'm making more money with comics now than when I was drawing them. Because of the royalties and also from selling comics originals. I've been doing some illustration work. Somehow, it's amazing, but I'm able to make a living out of that.

Well, this doesn't surprise me terribly much. Your renown as a comics creator is fairly over-

whelming. You've been compared to Crumb . . .

Oh!

You sound surprised, but you must have read these reviews, too.

Yes but, it's always, uh. I dunno. I still can't believe it. I will never get used to that. The other day I was in a bar with a friend and when we got out, this guy comes out and he wants to talk to me, and he was like, "Are you Julie Doucet?" It turned out he was a guy from Chicago, and he just wanted to say, "I love your work." That doesn't happen too often, though.

How does it feel to be placed among the comics greats? You're obviously still flattered by it.

Uh-hmm . . . yes, of course, it is very flattering. Especially Crumb, he is such an amazing artist.

Your renown as a feminist in the wider culture, however, is almost stronger than your renown in comics. It sounds like your status as a comics icon still surprises you, but does your status as a feminist icon?

Yeah, in a way that surprises me even more. Because I never intended to create that identity. Like I said, in those days I didn't hang out with women. I had such

a low self-esteem. I thought I was ugly, not feminine enough, that I didn't fit . . . and saw the other women as competition. That's why I was more comfortable with being with men only. So I was very far from thinking that any other women could relate to what I was doing! I did whatever came to my mind, I was just being myself. And obviously, I am a feminist. It's very strange to see what people see in my work.

**Do you feel like you were a part of Riot Girl?  
And what did you think of the Le Tigre song?**

At the time I was not very interested in things like that . . . I knew Riot Girl existed, but had no idea what they did exactly. Of course, I did hear the Le Tigre song. Once again very flattered, but that is very, very weird to be in a song of a well-known band. I didn't buy the CD, I can't deal with it. I mean, I love it when I hear it, but wouldn't listen to that at home. Too much.

**Has your work been misinterpreted?**

No, no. But I didn't really mean anything special [by it], like I said. I don't know. When the work comes out, it's not my business anymore. I mean, people should

. . . everybody should have their own interpretation, their own experience with it.

**As you prepared for the rerelease of this book,  
what struck you about this work now?**

Oh, I didn't know it was out of print. [Drawn & Quarterly] proposed it, thought it could be a nice edition because it was first published 10 years ago, sort of an anniversary

. . . It was a popular book. I guess I don't have a notion of how popular I am.

**Do you want to have a notion of how popular  
you are?**

Not really. Well sort of, but I am rather naive about it, I think. That's what it is. [Laughs.]

**What was it about collecting the dream comics  
that appealed to you originally? I mean, some  
of them were done 15 or 16 years ago now.**

It was not my idea.

It turned out to be an interesting way of compressing some of your most feminist work into one single, dream-like narrative. Throughout *Dirty Plotte*'s entire 12-issue run, in fact, you addressed issues that have really just come to the fore in recent years. Transgender issues,

body image issues, cutting. Can you talk about those some?

Oh. The cutting stuff. Well, very quickly I realized I was not alone. There were quite a lot of people doing that around the same time. I guess it was in my surroundings. I mean, it was strange, but I didn't make it up.

**How closely did your comics mimic your real  
life, and how much were you exaggerating for  
the sake of telling a story?**

Ah [laughs] . . . it was fairly realistic. Yeah, that was my way of life at the time.

**So do you honestly think that your appliances  
hated you?**

Oh . . . well . . .

I mean, they might have . . . like that damn iron.

Oh, I didn't even have an iron. Maybe it was not that realistic.

The other question that arises when we talk about realism is, was it difficult entering the all-boys' club of comics while attempting to represent your own sexuality?

I never felt like it was a problem. They all loved it. [They] were uncomfortable

**I'M MAKING MORE MONEY WITH COMICS NOW  
THAN WHEN I WAS DRAWING THEM.**



## WHEN PEOPLE ARE TOO COMFORTABLE, IT SEEMS THEY LOSE ALL MOTIVATION.



with the periods stories, which I thought was funny, silly. But told a lot. At first I could never imagine I would ever be published, so it was not a big issue. It was very much about myself, my own sexuality . . . exploration, acceptance. You know I have my own limits, of what I would *never* put in my work, I have my taboos. You can say it was also a little therapy for me. Speaking of exploring yourself, epilepsy was a big issue in your life while you were drawing comics, and a subject for your autobiographical pieces. When did you first realize you had epilepsy?

I had my first seizure when I was about 14. I didn't realize it because I lost consciousness and when I woke up I was walking on a dirt road with one of my aunts. I didn't know; she didn't tell me anything.

### Did she know something was going on?

Yeah, of course. But nobody told me anything. So when eventually I went to the doctor's office with my mom, the doctor told me, "So, you lost consciousness." And I was, "Whaa?" [Laughs.] My mom said, "Of course you did, Julie." So that's how I learned.

That's a pretty fragile age to be told you have a serious health issue.

Yeah, but at the time they said that I would be taking medication for four years and after that there would be a good chance that it would change back. My reaction was like, "Oh, this makes me special!" My mom cried. I was really shocked, at the same time, but it made me special and I loved that.

But you ended up taking medication for much longer than four years.

Oh yeah, I'm still . . . At this point, I'm 40 years old. It's going to be for the rest of my life.

And you are back in Montreal now.

Oh, I lived in New York and Seattle and one year back in Montreal, then in Seattle once again. Then I lived in Berlin for two years. Then I came back to Montreal in 1998. [Laughs.] Montreal is probably the only place in the world I could live and be able to live off my comics. 'Cause it's so cheap, compared to the States and also to Europe. And it's French-speaking here.

It's a very comfortable place. The only

thing is that I don't meet that many people who have this emergency of doing things, who are very passionate about what they do here. Which I miss, but at the same time, it is a very good place to work. I am a member of a printing studio which is very cheap and I would never find that anywhere else.

You're more comfortable in a French-speaking environment, it sounds like.

I guess so, yeah. I'm also able to buy French books. Very important. And I have friends here I can talk to about literature and exchange books.

And those grants . . .

I got one in 1999. I was able to quit comics when I got this second grant . . .

The first you had used to support your work *in* comics. What was that like?

[Laughs.] It's nice . . .

Did you get the check and just laugh for six months until the money was gone?

Oh, you're not really supposed to do that. The first one I used to get out of Montreal. [Laughs.] [I have this Swedish cartoonist friend, Gunnar Lundkvist, who got a lifetime grant! They had that sort of thing in Sweden. They give you money every year. Can you believe it? It's crazy. But it was bad for him because he couldn't work anymore, he lost all his will, couldn't get himself to sit down and draw. It took years but now he got over it. Yeah, when people are too comfortable, it seems they lose all motivation.

Here in Chicago we tend to have the opposite problem. We work and work and work, and often fail to seek recognition when we should. It's equally unhealthy, but at least we're getting stuff done.

Yeah, I couldn't live without work. That's one thing. I became so passionate about what I'm doing since I quit drawing comics . . . I didn't think I had it in me, to be that passionate about—anything. ☺

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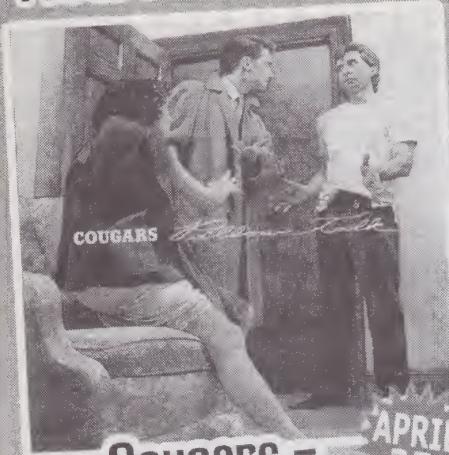


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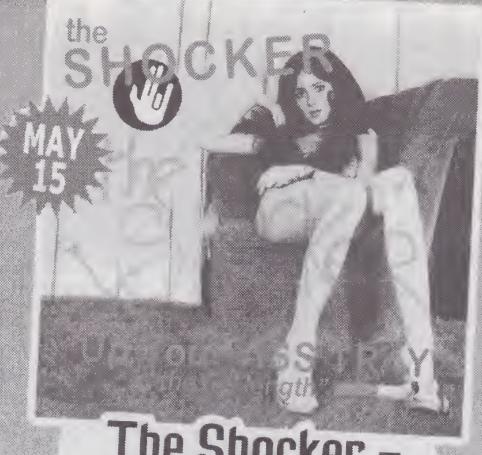
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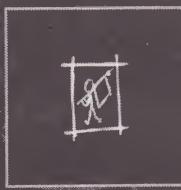
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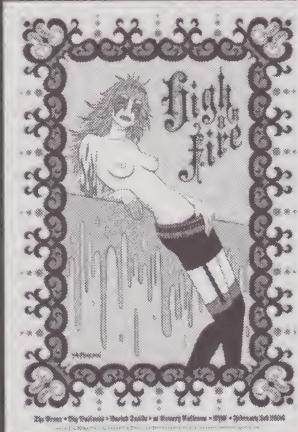
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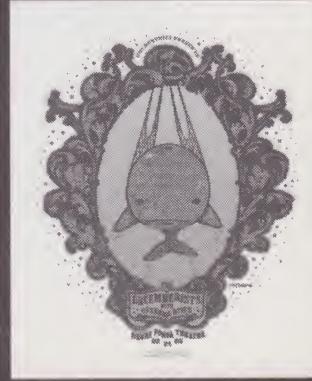
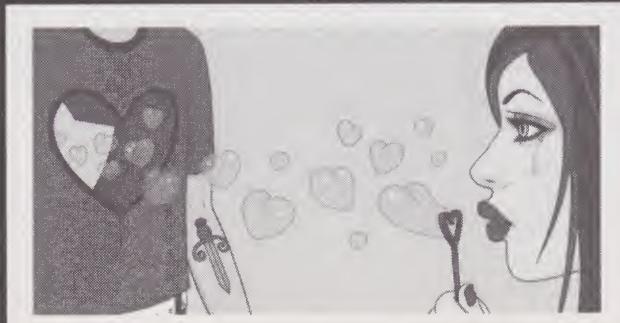
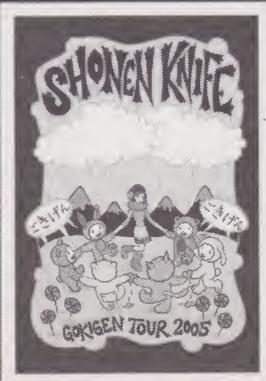
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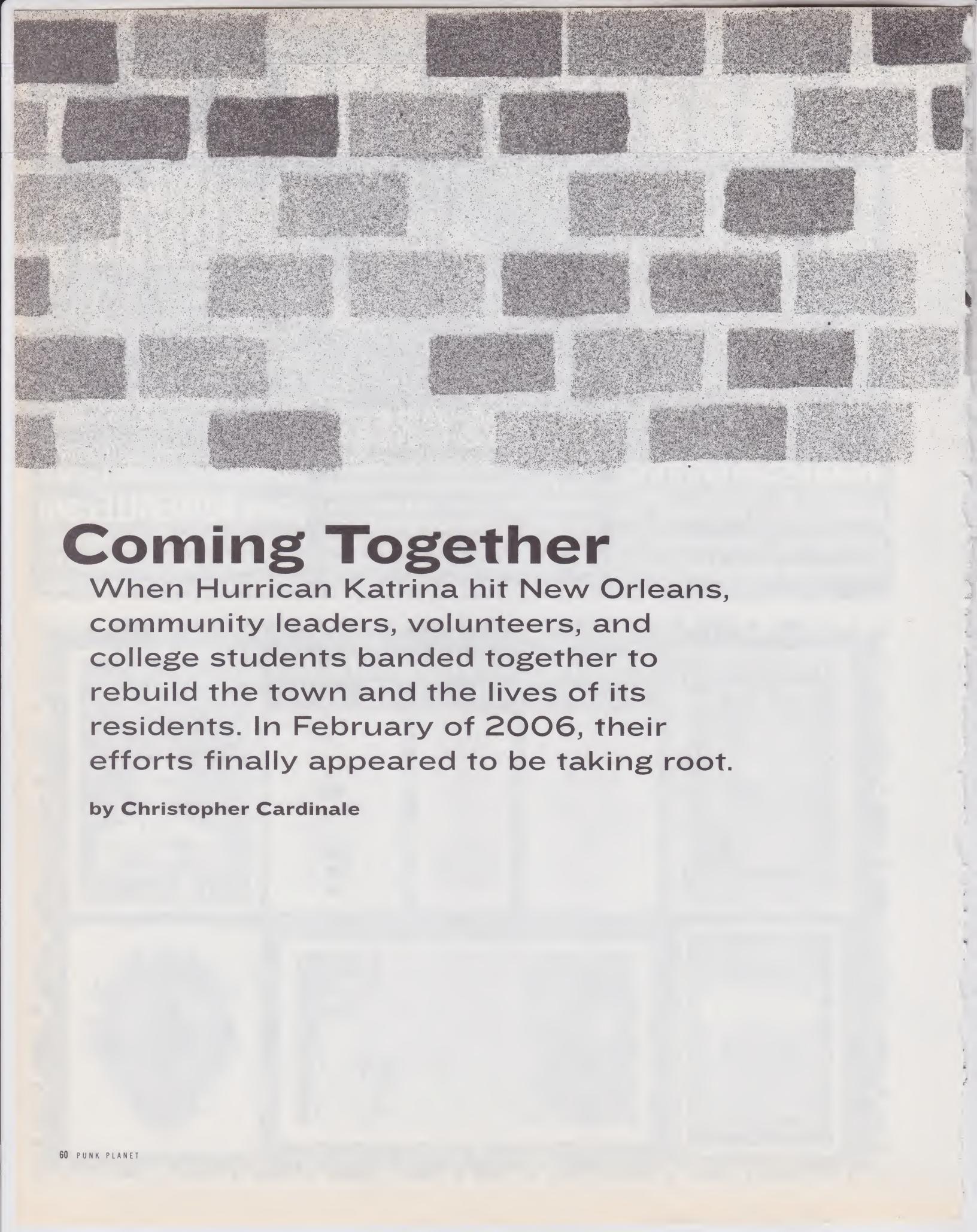
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# Coming Together

When Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, community leaders, volunteers, and college students banded together to rebuild the town and the lives of its residents. In February of 2006, their efforts finally appeared to be taking root.

by Christopher Cardinale

FEB. 11TH, 2006

I WENT TO NEW ORLEANS FIVE MONTHS AFTER HURRICANE KATRINA AND THE FLOOD CAUSED BY BROKEN LEVEES DEVASTATED THE CITY.

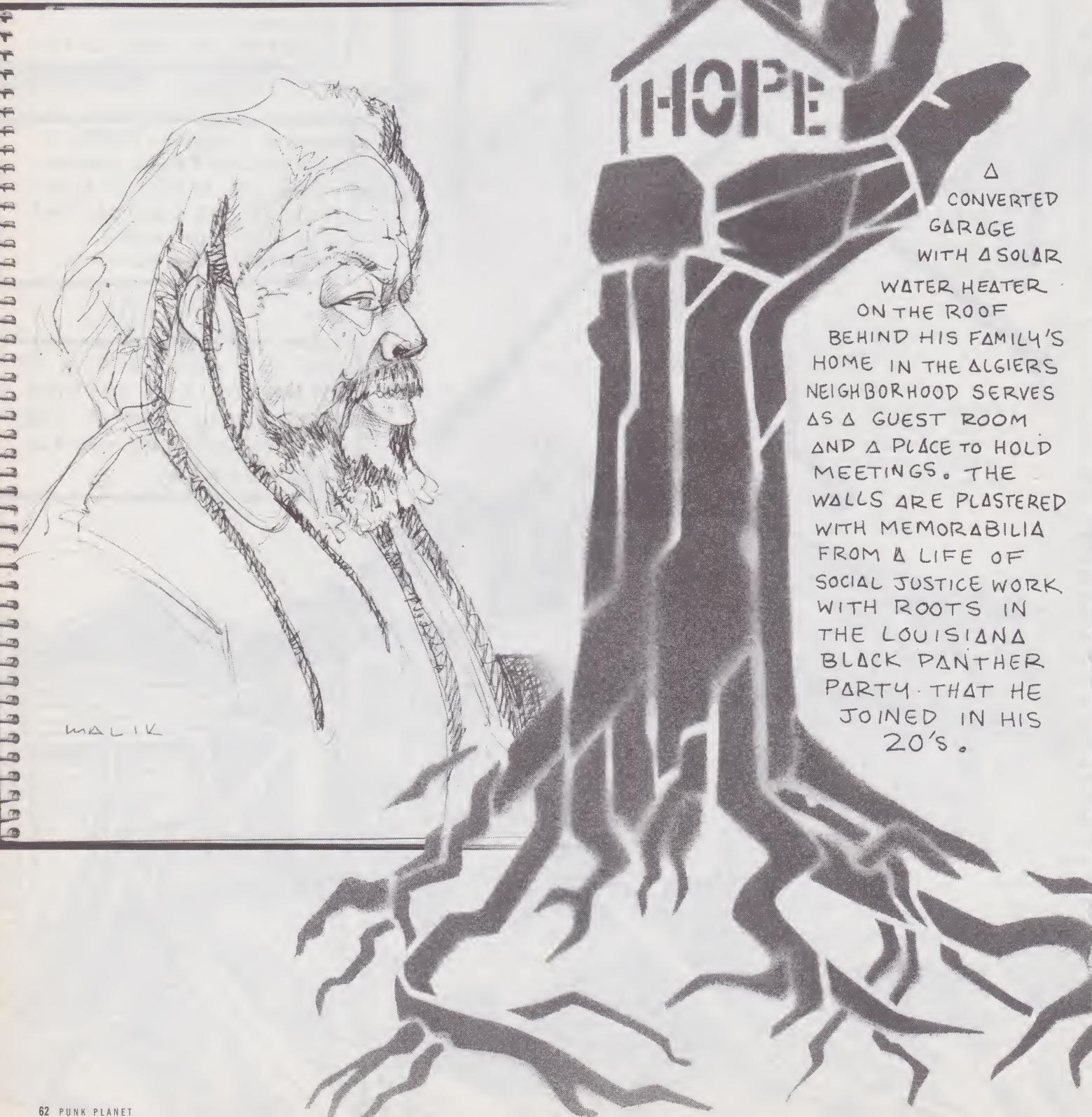
WHILE I WAS THERE I DID VOLUNTEER WORK WITH AN ACTIVIST RUN RELIEF ORGANIZATION CALLED COMMON GROUND COLLECTIVE.

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A SYMBOL PAINTED ON THE FRONT OF HOUSES THAT HAD BEEN SEARCHED FOR BODIES.

PEOPLE  
FIRST

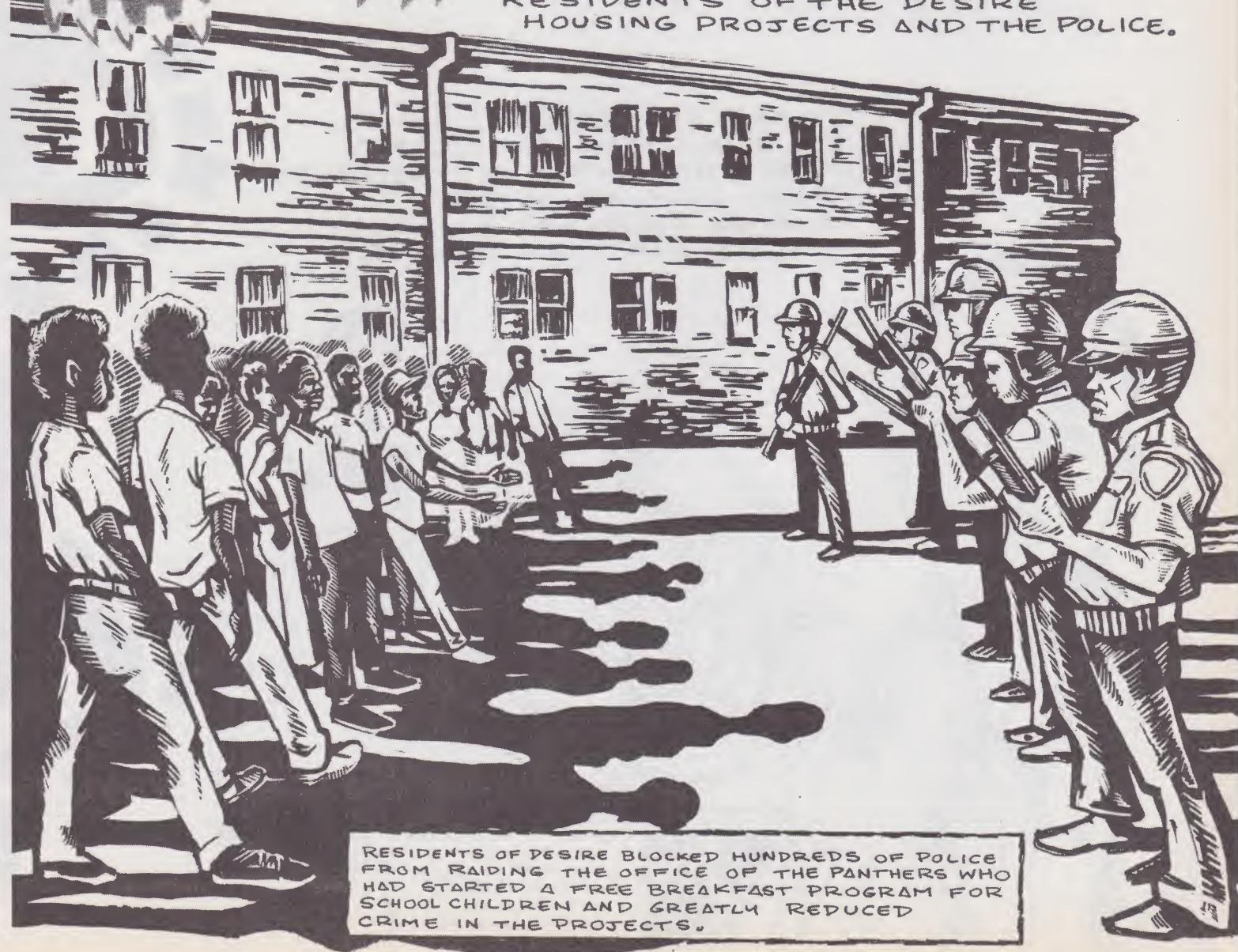
MALIK IS A FOUNDER OF  
COMMON GROUND COLLECTIVE.



GREEN PARTY  
CAMPAIGN POSTER  
2002

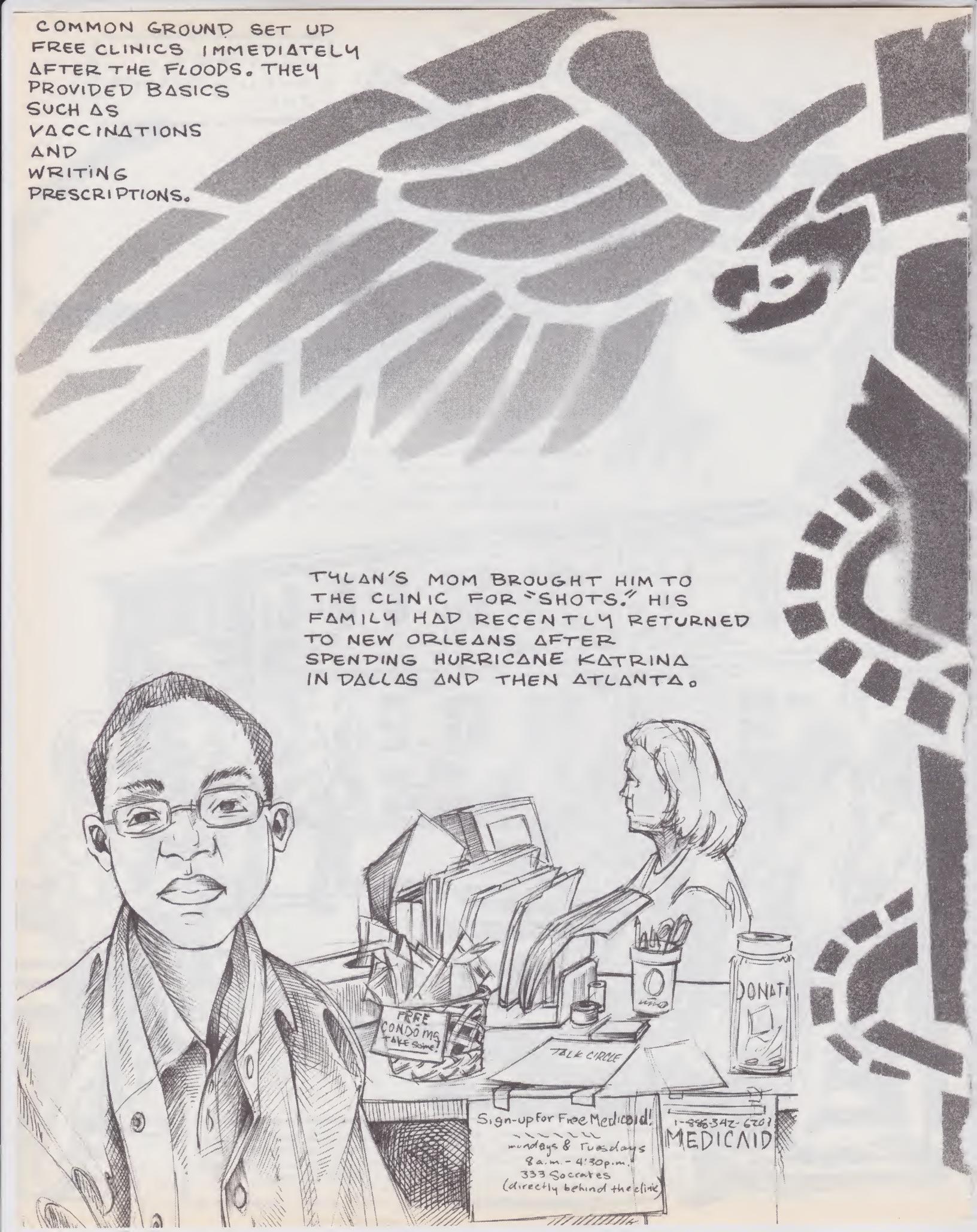


THERE WAS  
A BLOWN-UP  
NEWSPAPER PHOTO FROM 1970 OF  
A STAND-OFF BETWEEN THE  
RESIDENTS OF THE DESIRE  
HOUSING PROJECTS AND THE POLICE.

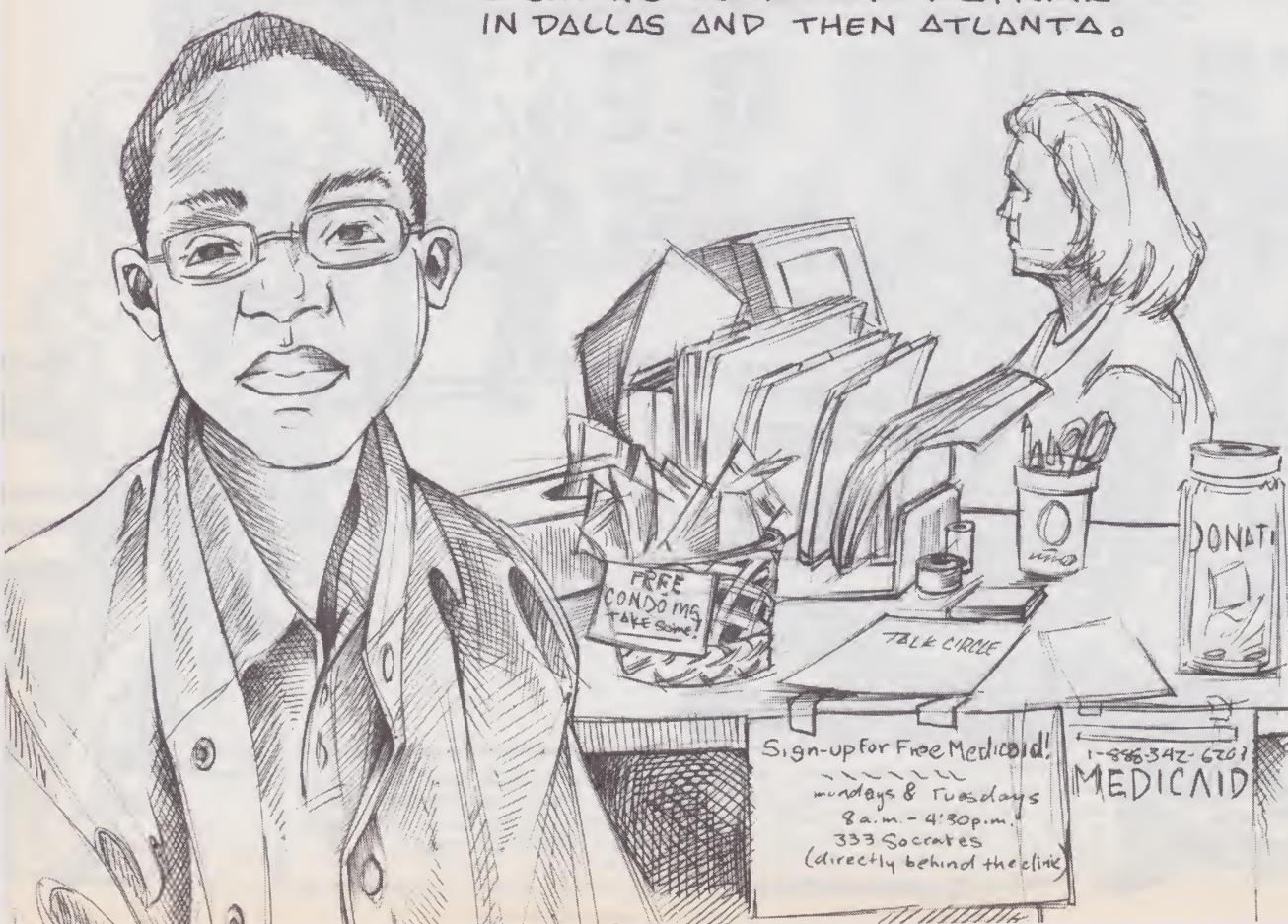


RESIDENTS OF DESIRE BLOCKED HUNDREDS OF POLICE  
FROM RAIDING THE OFFICE OF THE PANTHERS WHO  
HAD STARTED A FREE BREAKFAST PROGRAM FOR  
SCHOOL CHILDREN AND GREATLY REDUCED  
CRIME IN THE PROJECTS.

COMMON GROUND SET UP  
FREE CLINICS IMMEDIATELY  
AFTER THE FLOODS. THEY  
PROVIDED BASICS  
SUCH AS  
VACCINATIONS  
AND  
WRITING  
PRESCRIPTIONS.

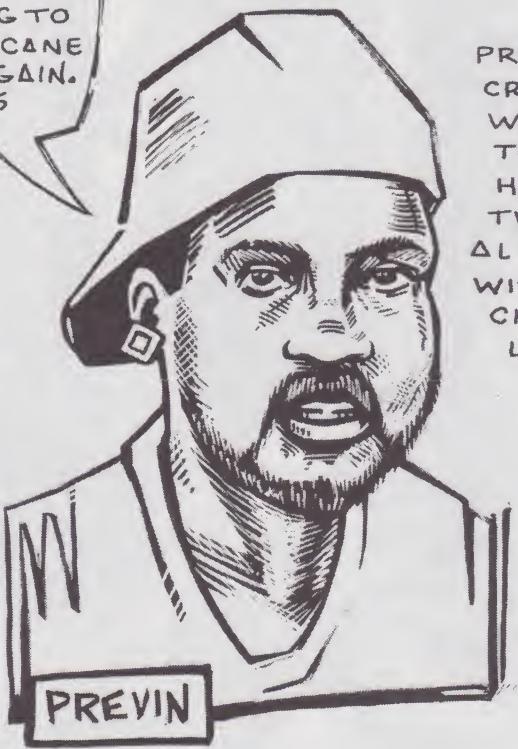


TYLAN'S MOM BROUGHT HIM TO  
THE CLINIC FOR "SHOTS." HIS  
FAMILY HAD RECENTLY RETURNED  
TO NEW ORLEANS AFTER  
SPENDING HURRICANE KATRINA  
IN DALLAS AND THEN ATLANTA.





FIVE MONTHS  
FROM NOW  
IT'S GOING TO  
BE HURRICANE  
SEASON AGAIN.  
2/13/06



PREVIN IS A CRANE OPERATOR WHO FLED WITH HIS FAMILY TO CLEVELAND BEFORE KATRINA HIT. HE STAYED THERE FOR TWO MONTHS BEFORE HE WAS ALLOWED TO RETURN HOME WITH HIS WIFE AND FOUR CHILDREN TO RESUME THEIR LIFE IN NEW ORLEANS. HIS HOME WAS NOT FLOODED.

DEBRA STAYED IN A HOTEL IN DOWNTOWN NEW ORLEANS THROUGH THE HURRICANE. SHE ESCAPED THE CITY JUST BEFORE THE GRETNA POLICE SHUT DOWN THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS BRIDGE TO FLEEING REFUGEES. SHE SAID, "IT WASN'T RIGHT THAT PEOPLE HAD BEEN KEPT OUT OF CERTAIN AREAS." DEBRA LOST ALL OF HER POSSESSIONS WHEN HER HOME IN NEW ORLEANS EAST WAS FLOODED.



HUNDREDS OF VOLUNTEERS WERE STAYING AT A COMMUNITY CENTER IN THE NINTH WARD THAT COMMON GROUND HAD EMPTIED AND DECONTAMINATED. EVERY MORNING THEY BROKE INTO WORK TEAMS THAT WENT TO HOMES AND CHURCHES IN THE LOWER NINTH WARD AND OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS THAT HAD BEEN FLOODED.



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RUBBER GLOVES,  
BOOTS, RESPIRATORS,  
AND GOGGLES WERE  
ISSUED TO ALL  
VOLUNTEERS TO  
PROTECT THEM FROM  
BLACK MOLD AND  
OTHER HAZARDOUS  
WASTE.

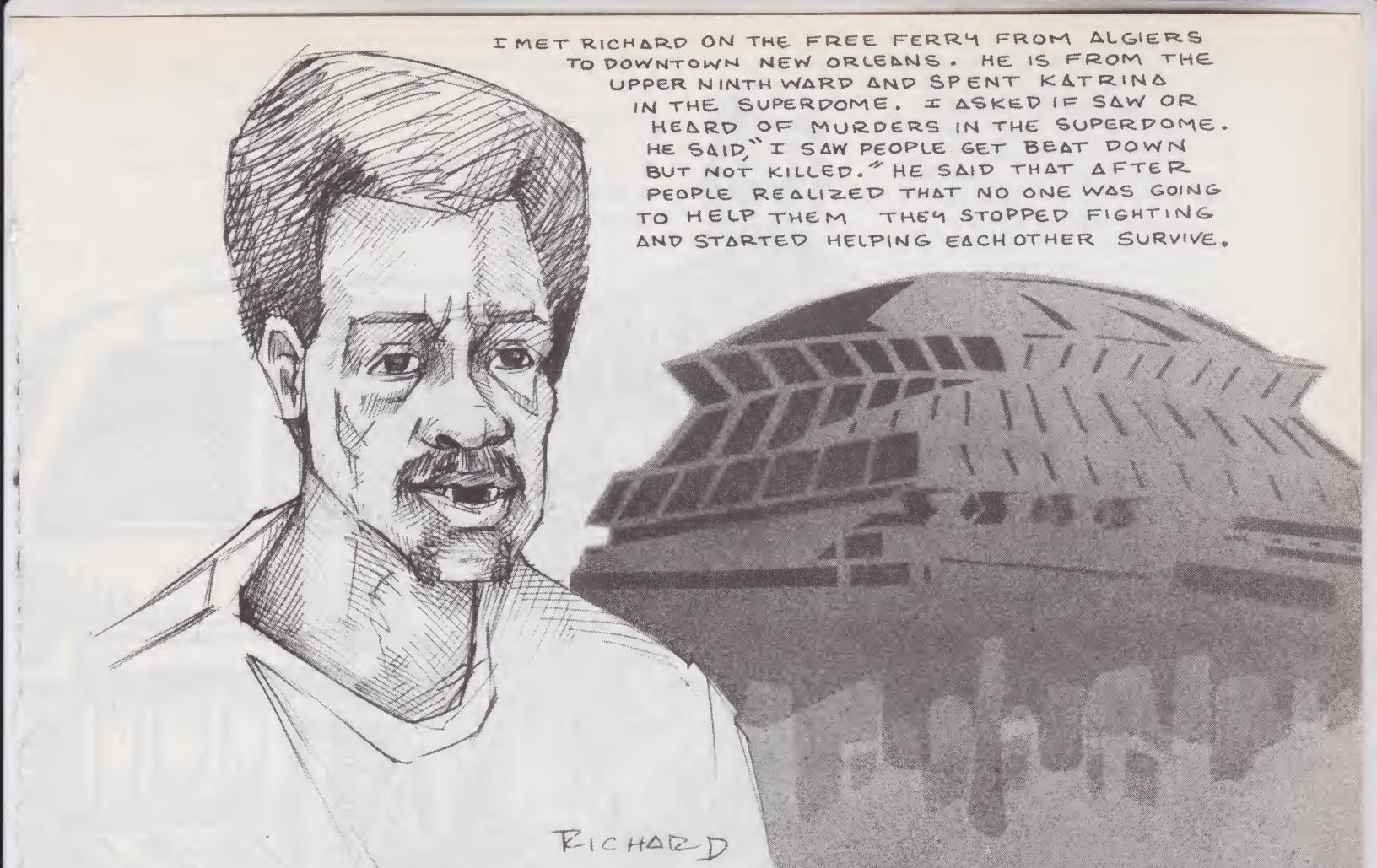


DOLORES IS FROM THE UPPER NINTH WARD.  
HER HOUSE WAS FLOODED WITH A FOOT AND A  
HALF OF WATER. COMMON GROUND GUTTED  
HER HOME. SHE WAS LIVING AT THE  
VOLUNTEERS' CAMP WHILE SHE WAITED  
FOR A TRAILER FROM THE FEDERAL  
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY.

DOLORES

THIS ELDERLY WIDOW'S HOME IN THE LOWER NINTH WARD WAS BEING GUTTED BY A GROUP OF COLLEGE STUDENTS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY. SHE SHOWED UP AFTER THE HOUSE HAD BEEN COMPLETELY STRIPPED AND WAS BEING BLEACHED TO KILL THE MOLD. SHE PULLED A PHOTO ALBUM OUT OF A SMALL PILE OF BELONGINGS IN THE CORNER THAT THE VOLUNTEERS HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO SAVE. THE WATER-SOAKED PAGES WERE SO ENCRUSTED WITH MOLD THAT YOU COULD HARDLY MAKE OUT THE FACES OF HER FAMILY MEMBERS. SHE SHOWED THE YOUNG WORKERS PICTURES OF THE HOUSE WHEN IT WAS FIRST BUILT AND SAID SHE PLANNED TO START OVER.

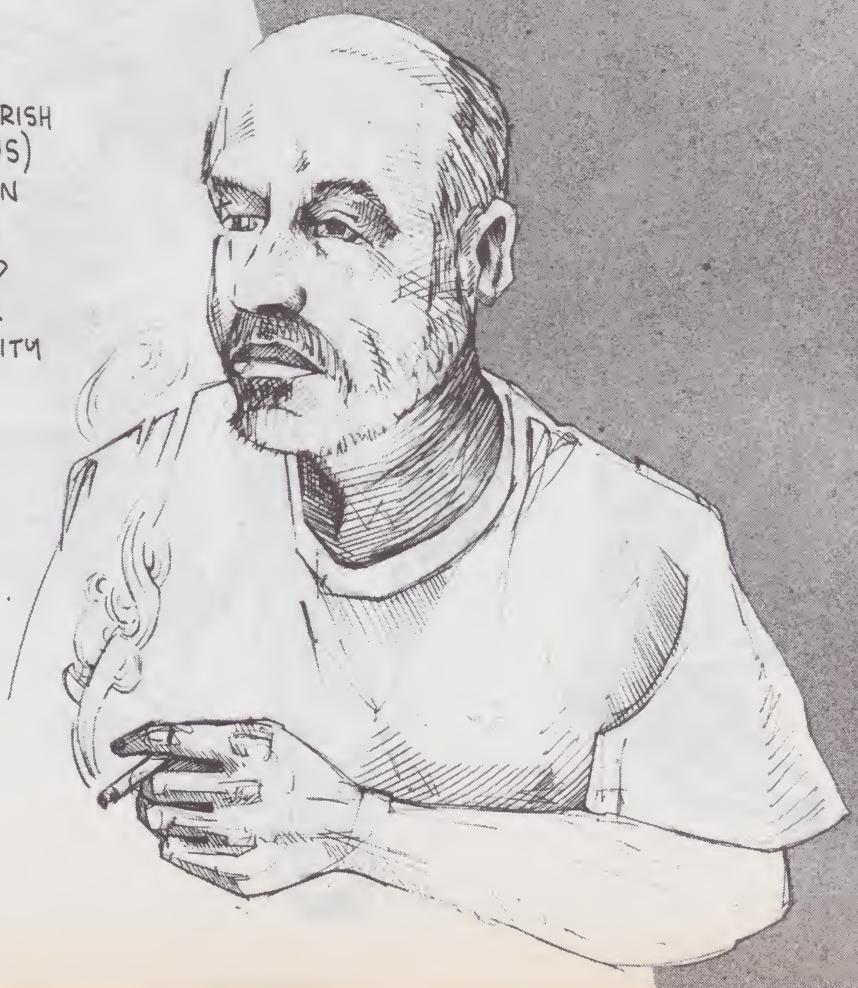




I MET RICHARD ON THE FREE FERRY FROM ALGIERS TO DOWNTOWN NEW ORLEANS. HE IS FROM THE UPPER NINTH WARD AND SPENT KATRINA IN THE SUPERDOME. I ASKED IF SAW OR HEARD OF MURDERS IN THE SUPERDOME. HE SAID, "I SAW PEOPLE GET BEAT DOWN BUT NOT KILLED." HE SAID THAT AFTER PEOPLE REALIZED THAT NO ONE WAS GOING TO HELP THEM THEY STOPPED FIGHTING AND STARTED HELPING EACH OTHER SURVIVE.

RICHARD

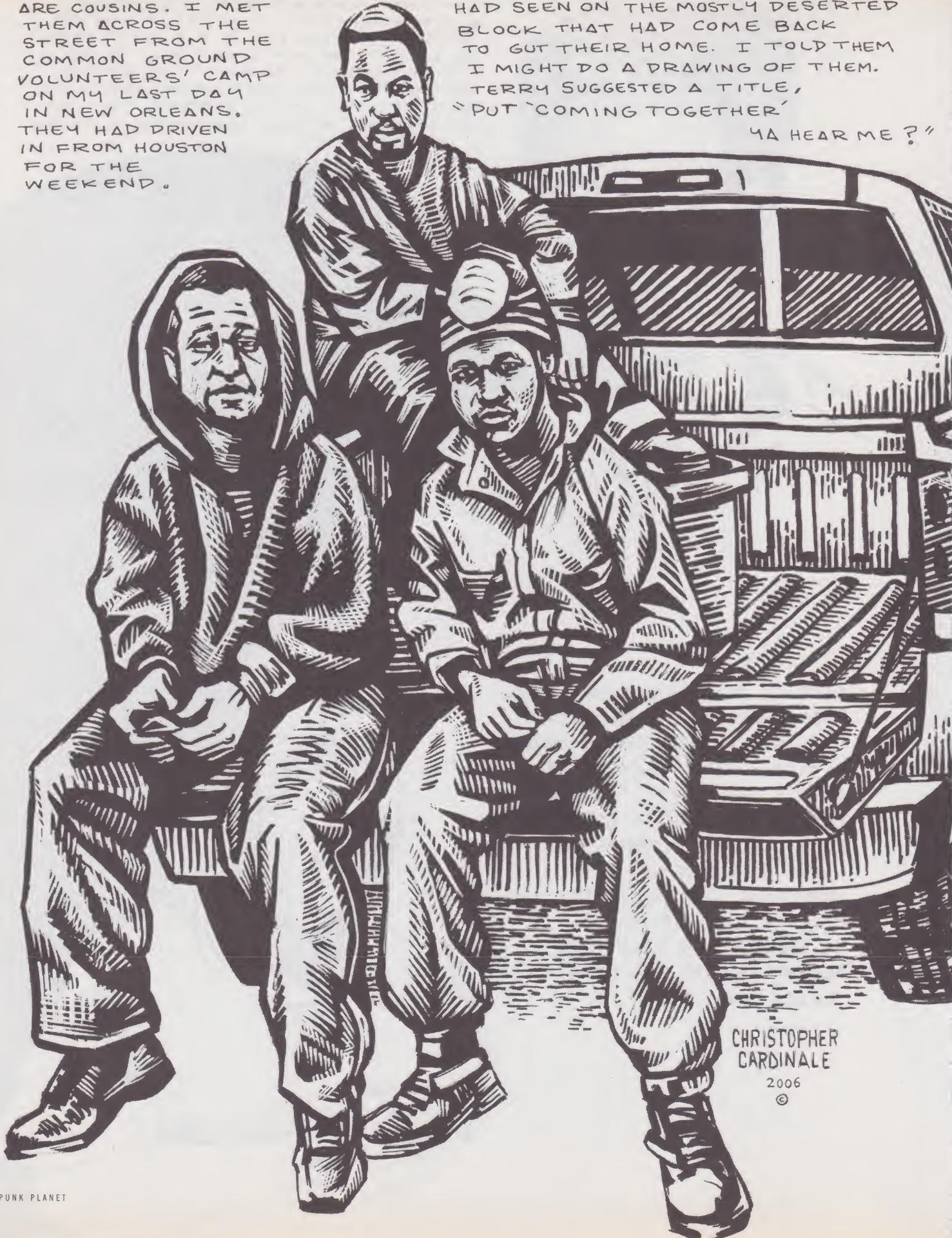
DAVID WAS LOCKED UP IN ORLEANS PARISH PRISON (A LARGE JAIL IN NEW ORLEANS) ON A MISDEMEANOR CHARGE WHEN IT FLOODED UP TO HIS CHEST. HE WENT 3 DAYS WITHOUT FOOD AND WAS TRANSFERRED TO BOSSIER PARISH MAXIMUM SECURITY FACILITY WHERE HE WAS DENIED HIV MEDICATION. DURING THE 35 DAYS HE WAS HELD HE LOST 25 POUNDS AND HEARING IN ONE OF HIS EARS DUE TO AN INFECTION.



PAT, TERRY, AND KEVIN  
ARE COUSINS. I MET  
THEM ACROSS THE  
STREET FROM THE  
COMMON GROUND  
VOLUNTEERS' CAMP  
ON MY LAST DAY  
IN NEW ORLEANS.  
THEY HAD DRIVEN  
IN FROM HOUSTON  
FOR THE  
WEEKEND.

THEY WERE THE FIRST PEOPLE THAT I  
HAD SEEN ON THE MOSTLY DESERTED  
BLOCK THAT HAD COME BACK  
TO GUT THEIR HOME. I TOLD THEM  
I MIGHT DO A DRAWING OF THEM.  
TERRY SUGGESTED A TITLE,  
"PUT 'COMING TOGETHER'"

"YA HEAR ME?"



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## Mexico

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DISCOS BOLAN Bilbao

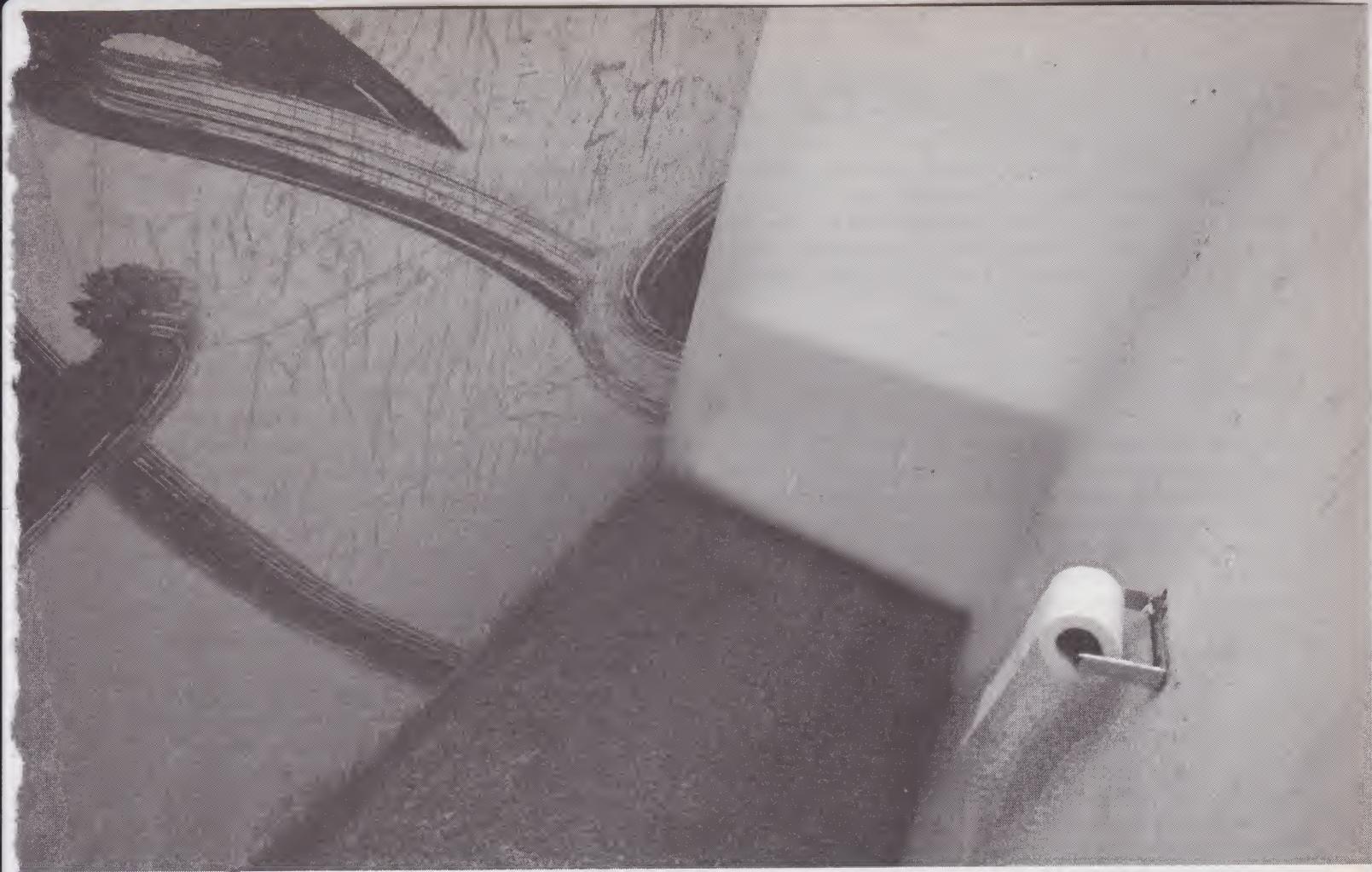
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PUNKER BUNKER Brighton, England  
MONORAIL MUSIC Glasgow, Scotland  
SPILLERS RECORDS Cardiff, Wales

# For a good time...

From sex jokes to politics, bathroom graffiti  
is the most accurate mirror you can  
find to put in front of the world.

BY ALICIA DORR



**Y**our average neighborhood pub or downscale coffee shop's "facilities" may just look like three slate-grey walls to you, intended only to shield you while you do your business. Scraps of toilet paper on the floor, the half-broken twist lock, and cold steel wastebaskets serve to remind you just how far you are from home—and just how public the place is. But while you might be planning an uncomfortable, although brief, lavatory experience, the person in line after you is raring to go: where you see boring painted walls, they see a canvas. They have a big black Sharpie burning a hole in their pocket, and they can't wait to go wild.

From the single-occupant loo in your favorite coffee shop to the rows of impersonal stalls at a local concert venue, public restroom walls are where "I'm a size 13/14, how can I lose weight?" and "I have a 12-inch dick" meet. It's a catalogue of good sex partners, complete with phone numbers, a self-help round-table, a tree for marking territory, and a busybody's dream come true. It even acts as a political outlet. And, while you might go into a public restroom wondering why so many people crap with pens, some argue that it's an art form and a public forum all in one.

On the surface it might seem to you that writing a name or a poem on a wall is nothing more than a cry for attention, but it is more than that. In fact, there are a whole slew of professionals and independent artists who have made it their business to know about what bathroom graffiti means. And they all agree: these private

spaces are exceptional places for personal communication—and that the writing on the stall says a whole lot more about culture and society than you think.

#### **The People Who Care: "For a good time call 805-XXXX"**

"In Bloomington, IN, there is a bar called Bear's Place," writes Sarah Dilworth via e-mail, a graduate student in comparative literature at Indiana University. "Inside of one of the stalls a classy young lass penned that John So-and-So was the best 'fuck in Bloomington.' Someone had scribbled out 'fuck' and replaced it with 'Hegelian philosopher.' I laughed every time I saw it."

Enter The People Who Care. They are the connectors for this untapped resource, noticing and telling people about it because they know it's humorous, but telling of our culture at the same time. No matter what is written on the stall wall, they know there is someone out there who can relate to it or disagree vehemently with it. On a more basic level, these are the people who say bathroom graffiti is a part of public life, so why not embrace it? A name was even coined for it in the '60s—latrinalia—as a way to encompass all of the writings, drawings, telephone numbers, and everything else written on the walls of public bathrooms. The most vigilant owner or janitor can paint and repaint, but there will always be names scratched down to the metal, and more users with more permanent markers.

In one Seattle, Wash. stall someone penned under a long

writing, "Oh, great. Another college student bought a Sharpie." This snarky comment is posted on the website [thewritingsonthestall.com](http://thewritingsonthestall.com), a user-contributed resource for stall-wall writings from all over the world. While the author might have meant it to be cheeky, it actually reinforces the idea that a lot of people are contributing to the form known as latrinalia, and what they are writing is constantly in flux. The site's creator Jonathan Horak says this is because it is a forum that's open to everyone—and that's why people keep toting pens into the stall.

"Instead of someone just writing something down for their own personal use, they're writing it somewhere that people can respond," Horak says.

Even when someone is just writing down his or her thoughts on how messy the restroom is, they are contributing to the stall's motif. Horak's site, started on a whim in 2001, now has up to 5,000 unique visitors and 30 to 40 thousand repeat visitors every month. Ironically, Horak has never written so much as an initial on a stall in his life. Horak says he started the site because he thought it was funny, but he viewed his role as a documentarian. What continues to make the site interesting to him—aside from the humor—is the community it fosters. In fact, to Horak, whether a person is writing on the stall walls or not might not be the most significant thing—it's that readers, like him, are sitting on the sidelines (i.e., the toilet) paying attention to what is written in front of them.

One of the main locations for latrinalia, obviously, is bars and restaurants. While some owners of bars and coffeeshops do repaint to combat bathroom graffiti—a guerilla war fought in the can—there are just as many other places, like near Iowa's staunchly liberal Grinnell College, that practically encourage writing in their bathroom stalls.

For years Philip Tadros co-owned and operated the Chase Café, a converted ballroom that hosted indie shows and events. Tadros remembers a morphing mass of scribblings and drawings layered over old latrinalia. Though he never wrote on the stalls himself, he said the work could be really exceptional in them, so he never covered it up. Independent businesses tend to allow graffiti, he says. These kinds of places have "hip" owners, a non-corporate person with an open mind when it comes to unconventional forms of art and communication. Either way, Tadros says it is something that isn't going away.

"It's probably been in bars since back with Adam," Tadros says, "from people carving in things to writing on things to whatever. I'm sure they enjoy the moment of getting a chance to secretly post something where they know other people are going to see it."

### **The People Who Study: The girls are saying "If you tinkle and you sprinkle, be a sweetie and wipe the seatie," but who knows what dem boyz want**

OK, so it isn't a question of whether there are people writing on bathroom stalls. Nor is it a question of whether there are people sitting on the toilet reading what's written (don't worry—you don't have to raise your hand). Where there's a phenomenon, The People Who Study follow.

Bathroom graffiti has its roots in urban graffiti and tagging. While the idea of tagging a railroad car or an overpass is a little

different than closing the door to a bathroom stall and writing as much as you please, the psychology behind latrinalia has not gone unnoticed by people who study tagging.

German graffiti archivist and social worker Axel Thiel points out that a graffiti artist has to worry about being arrested or fined while trying to get their signature out there—someone sitting in a stall obviously does not.

"[Latrinalia] is a unique way to express what really was on peoples' minds, a chance to say things without censorship," Thiel writes via e-mail. "You can be sure a lot of other persons must also come here . . . [It is] great publicity, especially to break taboos." Little is known about the people who write on bathroom walls because, well, you'd have to go in with them and ask them why they scribble while they piddle. But there is a social aspect to the writing on the stalls, and it provides an opportunity for archival data to be analyzed. That's where Heather Flynn comes in. As an undergraduate student in sociology at the University of California in Davis, Flynn had to do a study for a class. During the bathroom break, all Flynn had to do was look around her for inspiration.

So she got down to business, recording writings in every building type all over the UC Davis campus, with a male counterpart examining men's restrooms for her.

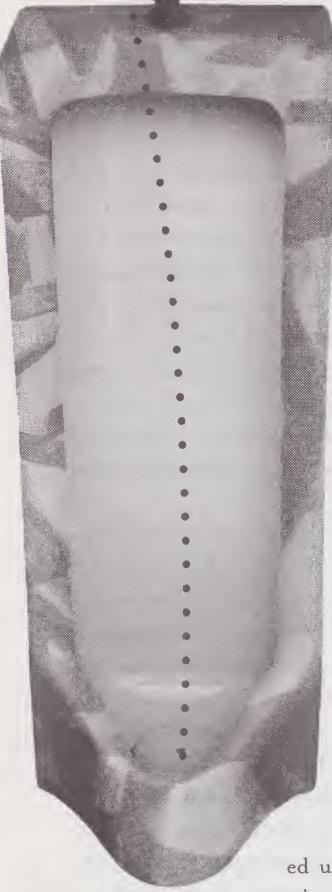
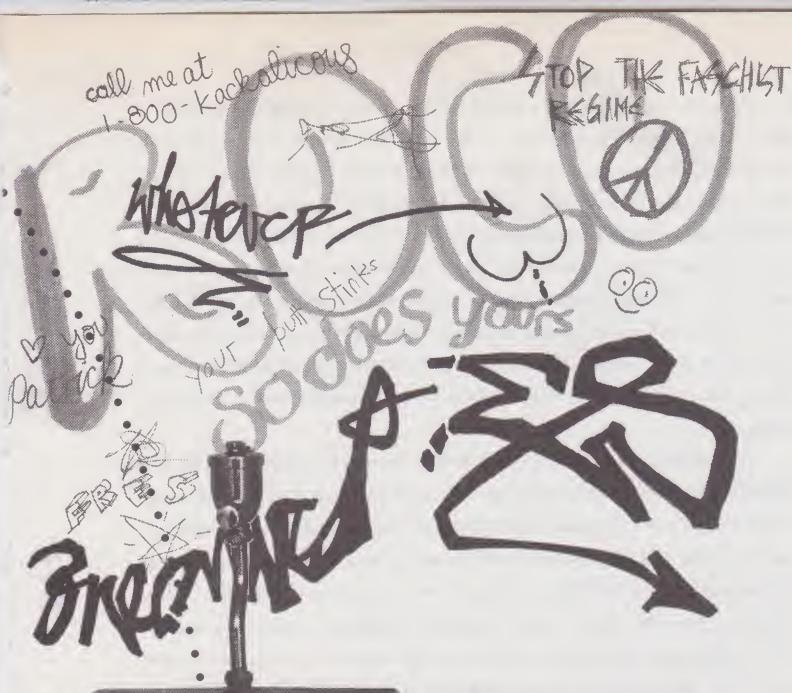
Of the women's writings, the most common responses by a landslide were advice-oriented, or questions that could be easily answered ("How many women have had an orgasm during sex?"). The results from men's restrooms were completely different, with most writings being competitive and often sexual in nature ("I have a 12-inch dick"—"Well, I have . . ."), most often heterosexual, homosexual, or homophobic in nature. Flynn said that, to her, this is a reflection of society at its most basic—an age-old debate about the hunter-gatherer part of human nature, i.e., while the women were talking to one another while they raised children and crops, men were competing for food and the women.

Of course, there are certain realities about women's restrooms that lend them to a different flora of graffiti. Women sit in the bathroom, so a degree of seclusion—and even time—is granted in these stalls. Men's restrooms aren't often as private, so it stands that if someone pulls out a pen, their scrawling may be subject to more scrutiny.

That aside, Flynn's findings about women's vs. men's bathroom writings have been echoed in other studies as well. Jamie Schenk was in her final year at the University of Michigan when she realized (also while sitting in the bathroom, of course) that the things women wrote to each other could be really heartfelt.

"Here are these anonymous people writing to each other and they're actually taking the time and being very sincere and sharing their intimate thoughts," Schenk said. "I stopped and thought, 'Wow'—exactly that, like a light bulb—like, what are these people doing?"

She set out to find the answer by writing and directing a documentary, teaming up with a producer and a cinematographer to create *Urban Scrawls*. Over 10 days she scoured several major cities in the Midwest to find the best answer to the question, asking everyone from bar owners to child psychologists—what's this all about? The half-hour long documentary



**Whether a person is writing on the stall walls or not might not be the most significant thing—it's that readers are sitting on the side-lines (i.e., the toilet) paying attention to what is written in front of them.**

has interviews with child psychologists and life-long bathroom graffiti artists, as well as everyone in between. Mostly, though, it's footage of bathroom graffiti with a raw documentary lens.

Through her filming, she ended up finding the same differences between men's and women's restrooms—homosexual solicitations paired with homophobia in men's rooms versus self-esteem issues in women's rooms. To some, this might not seem like an obvious social behavior, but to Schenk, it demonstrates a clear differentiation between men and women.

But even with all these answers from The People Who Study, Flynn is careful to point out that these results only apply to people who write in bathroom stalls—the problem with studying being that no one knows who they are.

## The People Who Want it Mainstreamed: "Free Chile." Underneath: "With every hamburger."

The average person spends thirty seconds to a minute and a half in the restroom doing their business. At first, this may seem like an odd fact for an advertiser to be packing, but for David Turner, the executive director of the Indoor Billboard Advertising Association (IBAA), it's essential, and he's one of the People Who Want it Mainstreamed.

Beyond just being interested themselves, some people want everyone to be interested in the writing on bathroom stalls. Turner has more stats where those came from, besides: in a restaurant, about 75 percent of the people in it use the bathroom while they are there, and when it's a bar or some other watering hole, that average climbs from a single usage to usages averaging 2.9 times over the course of a night. When ads first started appearing in bathrooms, which Turner says was a couple decades ago, they often became the target of bathroom graffiti. But he says more recently the market is speeding up, and in some spaces they have become as normal in lavatories as a sink.

While the idea of ads in stalls has been around for a lot longer than a decade, it's no secret where the tip came from. Companies and organizations like the IBAA take advantage of this "captive audience." People inevitably answer the call of nature, and while they do they'll have nothing to stare at. What better place for a company, where the consumer can't change the channel?

Unity Stoakes, a founder of the Bathroom Graffiti Project that encourages people to "tag, shoot, and share" graffiti all over the world, said ads in bathrooms haven't gone unnoticed—he just hopes that people who allow ads will allow graffiti, too. He says bathroom graffiti can be a way to connect people, because if you're going to the bathroom you're a participant whether you write or not.

"One of the reasons why we think bathroom graffiti is so powerful is because we don't think it can be censored," Stoakes says. "Even if it's only there for a few hours, the chances are someone will be exposed to it, someone will see it. It's not a mass medium, but it is a medium that reaches people."

### For a good conversation, meet here at 2:50 pm on July 10. Look for a maroon van.

Some think it's a very Neanderthalic way of getting attention without having to match your face to your name; for others bathroom graffiti is a part of society.

"Here's the thing: everybody's seen it, everybody sees it, and it's crossed everyone's path so it's crossed everyone's minds and thoughts, and there isn't one person who wouldn't have an opinion about it," *Urban Scrawl's* Jamie Schenk says.

Shut your eyes tight to block it out when you go to the bathroom, or tell everyone what you've just learned in there, but the fact remains that you will often find something written in the lav—a piece of living art. It's referring to the same things you do at a dinner party or on the bus with your pals—philosophy, politics, friendship, self-esteem, competition, sex—just without the censors. It's as much a part of the bathroom as toilet paper and not enough paper towels, and it's as much a part of civilization as a laugh or, *ahem*, taking a piss. ☺

**S**ome of the largest public outrages against the police stem from a tragic mishandling of events. These events, which span history, disproportionately involve African Americans: the fatal shooting of Black Panther leader Fred Hampton in Chicago (1969), the severe beating of Rodney King in Los Angeles (1991), and the murder of Amadou Diallo in New York (1999), to name a few. This is not a coincidence. According to John Hagan, Professor of Sociology and Law at Northwestern University, "... encounters between police and African Americans [are] more likely than encounters between police and white Americans to result in formal or legally based decisions." This tendency of police to unduly apprehend and abuse African-American individuals is an ongoing, systemic problem. A 1985 incident at Move (often thought to be an acronym, Move is actually the motivational name of the organization) headquarters in Philadelphia acts as one tragic example of rogue policing. The city police department, after unsuccessfully serving arrest warrants on four members of the group, dropped a bomb on the rooftop of the organization's communal residence, causing a fatal fire. If the police had used a softer hand in their relations with Move (by using nonviolent apprehension or brute, instead of mechanical, force), 11 people would not have died on that May day in 1985.

### Beginnings of a Movement

Move started as the American Christian Movement by John Africa (Vincent Leaphart), a former dog-walker. Move's teachings held that all life is sacred, all matter should be "cycled" (recycled), and childbirth should be a natural, drug-free experience. Members adopted the surname "Africa" and believed in self-defense, as well as the idea that human law is not to be followed, as it doesn't equally affect individuals. This revolutionary strain of thought attracted a number of individuals to the group. They lived in a communal house in Powelton Village in Philadelphia, a neighborhood that was, at the time, a predominantly black area fending off the gentrifying advances of Drexel University and the University of Pennsylvania. Responding to this obvious infringement upon the Move belief that "all living things, beings that move, are equally important," the group began to agitate for social and revolutionary change. These protests would eventually bring a bomb down upon Move headquarters, in a typical bout of police overreaction that killed 11 citizens of the US.

Move started agitating through constant tirades using a bullhorn and by actively leading protests, resulting in increased surveillance by the Philadelphia Police Department (PPD). After being arrested for nonviolent protests at high-publicity places—the Philadelphia Zoo, the Board of Education—Move committed offenses that would force police to put them into jail. Ramona Africa, the only adult Move member who survived the 1985 bombing, later stated in her interview with Pablo Sanchez of the Prison News Service: "You want to arrest Move people? You want to put us in the court system? OK, but you're going to have to do it consistently. And we were going in and out of jail so much that we racked up so many cases that it clogged the court system."

Cycling members through the court system was not to raise the ire of police as much as it was a profitable practice; on some

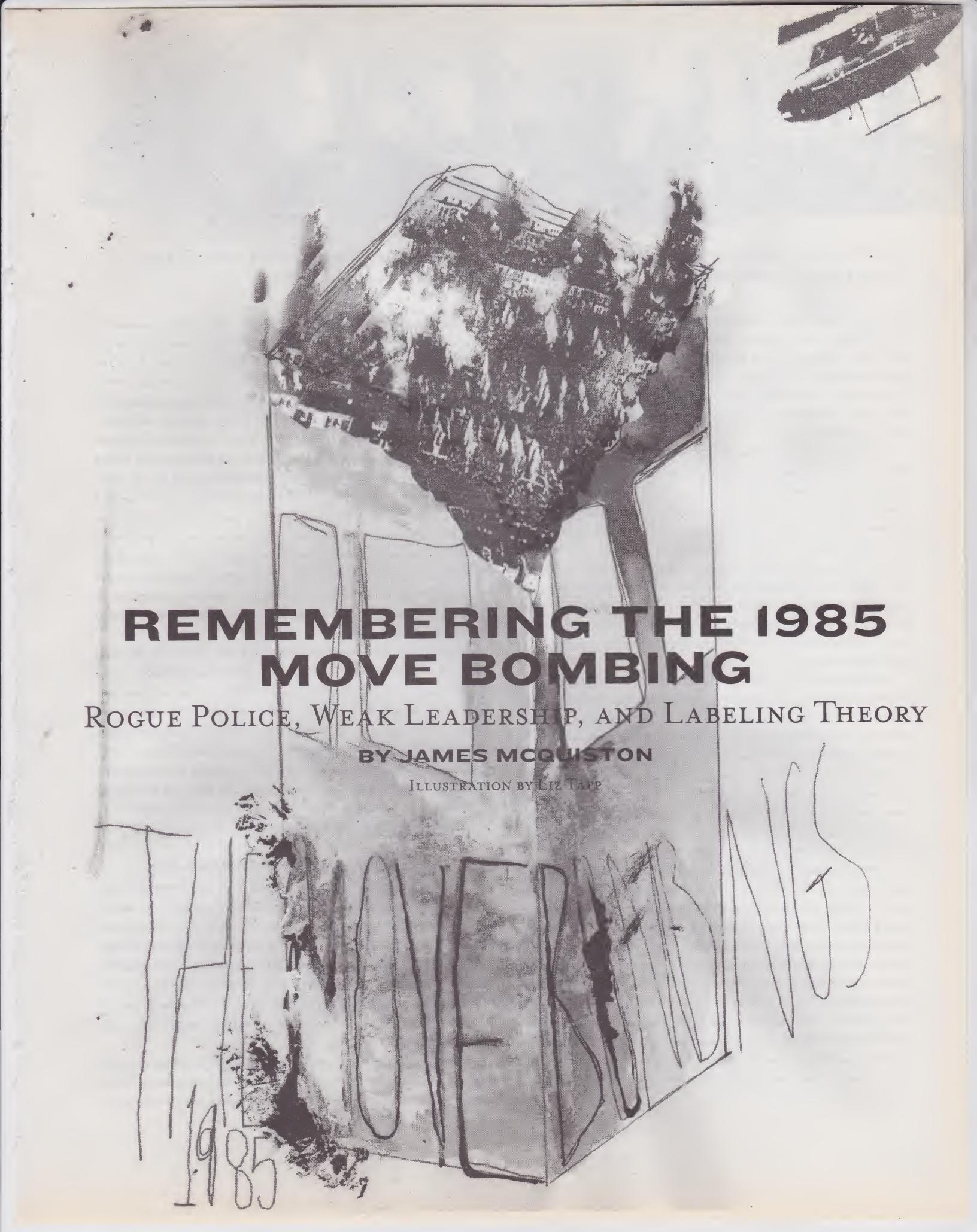
level, Move was making money each time a member was sent off to jail, regardless of the offense. The event that escalated Move/PPD tensions occurred in March 1976, when members of the organization and the police skirmished, leaving a number of individuals injured on both sides. The skirmish occurred at a party given for a number of Move members who had returned home after being released from prison. An infant named Life Africa was killed in these attacks—his death so heinous that John Africa adopted a Black Panther-esque type of armed resistance, famously declaring, "Move would counter with violence if attacked."

It was this change in philosophy that ultimately led to the Philadelphia police bombing of Move's house in 1985: police actions that Move originally perceived as motivated by institutional racism were, in fact, committed by a set of individuals who actively disobeyed Mayor W Wilson Goode in pursuing their anti-Move agendas. But the very reason police sustained particular interest in the group, and acted individually in the 1976 skirmish, relates to structural racism in policing. Scholar JM Floyd-Thomas argues that the PPD was interested in Move operations because, "the Move family's racial composition, counter-cultural lifestyle, radical politics, and unorthodox religiosity made them fair game to receive the full brunt of police oppression."

Move's distrust of the police was not surprising: a lack of faith in the police force, on the part of African Americans, is not limited to radical groups. Studies show that African-American individuals feel that police behave more harshly toward them, both in treatment and ultimate outcome (meaning, what punishment they are given, if any). There may be a psychological difference in the way African Americans and whites view their treatment by police, but there are some cold, hard facts that inform these outlooks. Differential treatment is not conspiracy theory; it is a fact of life for African Americans, especially those agitating for social change.

Scholars such as PAJ Waddington and Ronald Weitzer describe the real-life circumstances of racially biased policing as a self-fulfilling prophecy. This means that disproportionate numbers of African Americans are confronted by police or placed in the criminal justice system because they are visibly acting in a way contrary to the norms of dominant, white society. Obviously, this does not mean that African Americans as a group are more apt to criminal offense, but rather that the police system currently installed tends to turn law-abiding citizens into criminals.

This idea, called labeling theory, applies in Move's context, because the group was originally acting in a way that they felt was legal under their beliefs during their nonviolent protests. When authorities labeled group members troublemakers and put them into the criminal justice system for actions these individuals thought were legal, they began to act more like troublemakers. Case in point: the group later made the statement, "We are prepared to hit reservoirs, empty hotels, and apartment houses, close factories, and tie up major cities of Europe." The labeling of the group as troublemakers directly led to their own fulfillment of this prophecy.

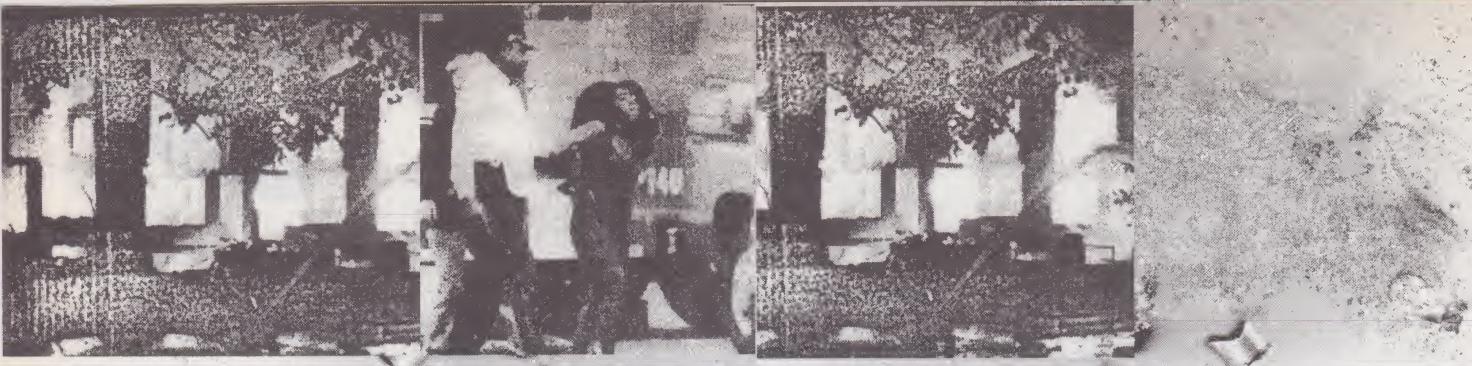


# **REMEMBERING THE 1985 MOVE BOMBING**

ROGUE POLICE, WEAK LEADERSHIP, AND LABELING THEORY

BY JAMES MCQUISTON

ILLUSTRATION BY LIZ TAPP



THE PPD DEALT WITH MOVE IN A RETRIBUTIVE, RATHER THAN RESTORATIVE, WAY—THE GOAL OF THE POLICE BEING A WHOLE-SCALE LIQUIDATION OF MOVE INSTEAD OF A PEACEFUL RESOLUTION.

### More Police Intervention Infuses Tension

An increase in police intervention brought about behaviors that were even farther outside the norms of society. This downward spiral of action culminated in two events: Move's outside patrolling of their house with weapons and the later 1978 shoot-out, which led to one death and several injuries, as well as further distrust of the authorities.

At each step, there was an escalation in police response to Move activity. It is critical to understand that the PPD could have stopped this escalation at any time by continuing to process law-breakers in a normal way; to allow the incident to gain a personal air meant that a tragic event was more likely. In a 2003 interview with Hans Bennett (of the *Dissident Voice*), Ramona Africa commented on how PPD officers targeted Move: "All neighborhoods have disputes [with the police] but they aren't bombed. The residents of that area have demonstrated . . . demanding some kind of relief from the drug trafficking . . . You don't see any bombings in that neighborhood. You don't see cops en masse coming out to that neighborhood."

Where the patience of individual police may have been tried by the number of times they were called out to Move headquarters for petty violations, the defining event in the changing of police attitudes occurred with the murder of Officer James Ramp during the May 1978 standoff. While the forensics expert at the later Move Commission would absolve the group from any murder charges (the bullet entered from behind Officer Ramp, instead of coming from the front), the hostility of the police officers involved in this standoff was so great that the mayor barred all officers who were part of the 1978 standoff from the 1985 siege.

Instead of following the orders of the mayor (who, in 1984, met with two former Move members who implored him to release group members from jail and thus diffuse increasing tension among police, neighbors, and the group), the police came to the Move house in the early morning of May 13th, 1985 and proceeded to shoot 10,000 rounds of ammunition into the house and drop a three-and-a-half pound bomb on its roof. Both the components of the bomb and a gun used in the attack were of a military-grade quality that was expressly banned by the leaders of the PPD. How could the 1985 bombing have been avoided? The PPD dealt with Move in a retributive, rather than restorative, way—the goal of the police being a whole-scale liquidation of Move instead of a peaceful resolution.

Clearly, the PPD had at its disposal other, more productive ways of dealing with the conflict. First off, lesser penalties for the nine members charged in the 1978 standoff would have kept the demands of the rest of Move reasonable (each of the members was given 30 years for murder). Essentially, nine individuals were given a murder charge in an attack that could only have been perpetuated by one individual. Secondly, a greater amount of sensitivity training should have been given to the Philadelphia police force. This action might have led to a greater empathy for the situation by leaders like Police Chief Gregore Sambor, who blocked the Fire Department Chief from putting out the fire on the house caused by the bomb. Finally, the continual arrests of Move members might not have transformed Move's mission from something resembling Martin Luther King's nonviolent theories to Malcolm X's armed resistance if there had been a deferment program in place, in addition to a closer abiding of Philadelphia law by all who lived in the Move house.

Prior to the bombing, Move learned that videotape showing the abuse of one member, Delbert Africa, was being shown to the PPD trainees as a training exercise. Already, a condition was being created in which both sides, Move and the PPD, were ready to fight. If the mindset of individuals like Chief Sambor was that such groups needed to be stopped at all costs, why was there not a greater review of the history of such heavy-handed actions against dissidents? Ramona Africa explains that the PPD was not acting in a rational or legal matter, that "anybody can see that their aim, very simply, was to kill Move people—not to arrest anybody."

### Police Fail to Make "Goode" on Mayor's Plan

The original plan put forth by the mayor and the Fire and Police Chiefs was to first knock off the armed bunker on Move headquarters by water cannon and eventually wear the organization down to the point where it could then apprehend Ramona Africa, then leader of the organization. The plan was declared a failure after six hours (whereas the 1978 siege lasted two months). Move had guns in 1978 just as they had guns in 1985. What had changed to account for such a rapid change in plans and such a lack of patience?

This change seemed to develop through a set of circumstances that in only the most tangential sense involved Move. Mayor Goode, the city's first African-American mayor was elected

on the backs of white liberals and middle-class African Americans to oust Frank Rizzo. People living in the same Osage Avenue district as Move headquarters were essentially those who elected Goode, and those constituents were growing tired of the group's antics. By this time, Move shifted from directly protesting the government, putting the impetus of change on those individuals they lived near. When Osage Avenue residents complained about Move spewing such niceties as "MF (motherfuck) Santy Claus," the group told residents to tell their politicians that, "the reason Move is doing it is because they want their people home." Ramona Africa, in her 1996 radio interview with Pedro Sanchez, said that, "The reason our people were doing this is because they couldn't get Wilson Goode to listen."

Aside from the pressure being enacted on Mayor Goode by the residents of Osage Avenue, Move exacerbated the situation by fortifying their house. During this time, there was a lack of harassment of the Osage Avenue neighbors, which in turn led to a relaxation of the pressure on Mayor Goode. This relaxation caused all segments of the City of Philadelphia to let their guard down until late April, when the bullhorn messages restarted with more vitriol and violent threats. Instead of the nebulous threats typical before the 1978 shootouts, Move threatened to kill any government official who would set foot on their property. The city perceived this change in behavior—from a more timid to a more aggressive style—as a viable threat.

The ultimate decision to bomb the compound was still wrong, but Move was not necessarily as innocent as they would make themselves out to be. However, Mayor Goode was unaware of the plan to increase the power of the bomb, which was originally only intended to be a "concussive device." Likewise, the Fire Department chief was unaware of Mayor Goode's order to turn the hoses on the raging fire created by this bomb. Even Police Chief Sambor was left in the dark about some of his officers bringing in military-caliber guns (20mm anti-tank, 50-caliber machine guns) for the assault. Furthermore, the order by Mayor Goode—to remove all officers who'd participated in the 1978 shootout from the teams assigned to the May assault—was not followed. Move members themselves were unclear of the length that the City of Philadelphia would go to remove them from their home; if this was communicated to them more clearly, the situation may have been defused without all the bloodshed and destruction created by the bomb and subsequent fire. Finally, the pressure placed on Mayor Goode reflected another failure; if Mayor Goode was not going to do something drastic for the "nuisance" that was present in the Osage Avenue area, there was going to be a good chance a new Mayor would be installed on the next Election Day.

## Remembering the Move History Fuels Future Change

It's dangerous when individuals in power operate solely under their own interpretation of what is right and lawful, as did the PPD in the case of the 1985 bombing. And Move cannot escape all guilt in the matter. Yet by being tagged as criminals at the earliest part of their existence, a kernel of criminality was created that simply grew each time members of Move were apprehended. This "labeling theory" shows the gradual shift in Move's philosophy through the years from a nonviolent group that advocated for the right to life for all creatures to one that threatened to kill any City of Philadelphia employee who dared to set foot on their property. The existence of retributive justice (that espouses labeling theory as a method to "punish" the badness out of individuals in the system) created the possibility that US government officials would bomb their own people. Instead, the city could have pursued a more holistic brand of justice—one that encouraged prison deferment based on the completion of programs, e.g. programs relating to issues neighbors complained about to city officials (cleanliness, child care, etc.).

Regardless of hypothesizing what *might* have happened if something had changed in the relationship between Move and the PPD, we must continue to remember this radical history: if we allow the dominant history to completely wash over the events of the Move bombing, the Black Panther massacre, and other tragic events, those in power gain legitimacy. In particular, we must remain critically aware of the excesses of the police. Not a year goes by without a news story about overzealous police given short shrift by newspapers. The ordeals of Rodney King, Amadou Diallo, Abner Louima (beaten and sodomized with a broom handle by police in 1997), and Robert Davis (a retired schoolteacher who was beaten severely by New Orleans police in October of 2005) are merely the most well-known of incidents regarding racist police since the Move bombing of 1985.

As Ramona Africa said in her 2000 speech at Kent State, "I am saying that we must stand up and let our voices be heard. We cannot afford to sit back and allow another Kent State to happen, another Jackson State to happen. We cannot afford to have another Amadou Diallo to be shot at 41 times." Dissent, both in the streets and in the pages of publications—whether online or in print—is necessary to change society. ☺

DISPROPORTIONATE NUMBERS OF AFRICAN AMERICANS ARE  
CONFRONTED BY POLICE OR PLACED IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM  
BECAUSE THEY ARE VISIBLE ACTING IN A WAY CONTRARY TO THE NORMS  
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# LEGISLATING WEIGHT LOSS: *Is Fatness a Federal Affair?*

BY MAYA SCHENWAR

ILLUSTRATION BY NADINE Y NAKANISHI

Pull up the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) homepage these days, and it looks frighteningly like the latest copy of *Glamour* or *O Magazine*. At [www.fda.gov/lose-weight](http://www.fda.gov/lose-weight), we're told, "You Can Lose Weight—Here's How!" followed by instructions on counting calories, setting weight-loss goals and "giving ethnic foods a try." The goal is to combat what the FDA calls the "obesity epidemic," which supposedly claims the lives of 400,000 Americans per year. The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2005 Dietary Guidelines target weight loss as America's number-one health goal. Looks like it's time to rally the troops for the war on fat.

The FDA is spreading the message through a variety of obesity awareness advertisements and programs in schools and workplaces. Government intervention in weight loss doesn't stop at "educational" efforts, though. In many states, including Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, and West Virginia, schools are required by law to weigh students each year and report their weight and Body Mass Index (BMI) to their parents, in a format much like an academic report card.

Meanwhile, at home, government health agencies claim that over 30 percent of Americans are obese, endangering their health and shortening their lives. However, many health professionals are questioning the link between body fat, illness, and death.

Dr. Glenn A Gaesser, a professor of kinesiology at the University of Virginia and author of *Big Fat Lies: The Truth About Your Weight and Your Health*, calls the FDA's standards for morbid obesity "arbitrary," noting that people do not die of fat.

"There are 'healthy obese' people who are in no need of 'treatment,'" he says. "Furthermore, most of the health problems of the 'unhealthy obese' (i.e., blood pressure, lipids, insulin and glucose levels) can be remedied by changes in diet and physical activity independent of weight loss." In his recent study, "Obesity, Health, and Metabolic Fitness," Gaesser reports that fat people are no more likely to have clogged arteries than thin people, and that body weight and BMI are not indicative of death rates. In fact, according to a study by the federal Center for Disease Control (CDC) itself, "excess" body fat does NOT claim 400,000 lives per year; people categorized as

"overweight" (BMI 25-30) actually tallied 86,000 fewer deaths per year than those categorized as thin.

The rigid standards set by the government are outdated and are not based on sound science, says Peggy Howell, public affairs chair of the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance (NAAFA). The height/weight charts that determine BMI were created in the 1970s, with only a slight revision in 1998. "I don't question the statistics that 30 percent of the American population is over a particular weight," Howell says. "I do, however, take exception to the yardstick they are using [to determine health]."

In April 2005, the yardstick was revised—but it hasn't gotten any longer or more flexible. Replacing the USDA's classic Food Pyramid, the new system—MyPyramid—recommends a more "personalized" approach to weight loss, advising Americans to gradually modify their food choices and exercise habits. So far, so OK. However, the program website directs users to the USDA BMI Calculator, which prescribes rigid calorie counts and recommended foods—"personalized," apparently, means ignoring your appetite and planning your meals according to a government-regulated computer program.

## Calorie-Counting Consequences

According to MyPyramid's creators, thinking healthy means doing your math. "Our report concludes that there is no substitute for the simple formula that 'calories in must equal calories out' in order to control weight," says FDA Deputy Commissioner Lester M Crawford upon unveiling the government's 2005 dietary guidelines. "We're going back to basics, designing a comprehensive effort to attack obesity through an aggressive, science-based, consumer-friendly program with the simple message that 'Calories Count.'"

Yet many health professionals concur that counting calories is not the route to better health—in fact, it could mean body sabotage. Putting America on a diet won't solve its health concerns, says Gaesser, calling the USDA's 2005 Dietary Guidelines "misguided." He notes that there are no weight loss programs with a high success rate, and that dieting often ultimately leads to weight



gain. Moreover, dieting—especially yo-yo dieting—can worsen cardiovascular health, and, Gaesser notes, the super-popular low-carb diet tends to raise cholesterol levels.

Marilyn Wann, a member of the NAAFA board and author of the book *Fat! So?: Because You Don't Have to Apologize for Your Size*, adds that the push toward weight loss actually gives nutrition and exercise a bad rap. "The categories of 'overweight' and 'obesity' are nothing but a danger to public health," Wann says. "Thin people will enjoy better health if they eat their veggies and enjoy regular physical activity. But as long as those health-enhancing habits are linked to weight-loss goals, everyone will avoid them. The average person wants to avoid punishment. When good nutrition and regular exercise are used to punish us fatties, it's a poison pill that gets in the way of everybody enjoying good health habits." Calorie-counting and prescribed diets—external monitors of "health"—can lead us to ignore our

internal signals, which can help us figure out what makes our own bodies happy and healthy.

What's more, the government's overwhelming emphasis on weight loss ignores a significant weight-related problem that may well have reached "epidemic" proportions: eating disorders. On the USDA BMI calculator website, a healthy BMI is defined as "below 25"—no mention is made of the dangers of being underweight. However, American children are 222 to 1097 times more likely to have an eating disorder than Type-II diabetes, according to policy analyst Radley Balko, who averaged data from the CDC and the National Institute of Mental Health.

So, why no [www.fda.gov/eatingdisorders](http://www.fda.gov/eatingdisorders) site, featuring pictures of skeletal-looking people and ads for Ensure weight-gain shakes? "You can't 'see' eating disorders, except for the extreme and relatively rare cases of anorexia," Gaesser says. "Obesity is visible 24/7—and our culture doesn't tolerate fat."

## Weight Discrimination: The Acceptable Prejudice

This hardly questioned intolerance of fat—even from “official” sources like the FDA—means that fat people must deal with a lot of “official” discrimination, with few legal defenses available to them.

Weight bias isn’t just a matter of getting made fun of on the playground (though that’s a serious problem in itself). A study by the Yale Rudd Institute reports that 24 percent of nurses says they are “repulsed” by fat people, and 28 percent of teachers says that obesity is the worst thing that could happen to a person. Overall, parents give less money for the college education of their “overweight” children than their thin children. Fat discrimination plays out in hiring practices and even in wages. Studies show that most employers would rather hire a thin person than a fat one, and that highly educated obese women tend to earn less than their “normal”-weight peers.

Sondra Solovay, adjunct professor of law at New College of California and the author of *Tipping the Scales of Justice: Fighting Weight Based Discrimination*, says that the government’s emphasis on weight loss stigmatizes fat people and perpetuates already rampant discrimination.

“It makes it harder for people to be judged on their merits rather than their measurements,” Solovay says. “In practical terms it means a fat student will be more likely to drop out of school; if she survives school she will be more likely to be denied a good job; if she gets a good job she will be more likely to be denied health benefits; if she gets health benefits she will be more likely to face barriers to health care. It limits the ability of fat people to contribute fully to society, which hurts our culture at large.”

It would seem that the federal government’s role in this mess would be to combat weight bias, as it has attempted with racial, gender-related, and disability-related biases. However, according to the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, no national laws prevent size discrimination. In addition to the lack of laws protecting fat people’s rights, Solovay notes that few law organizations volunteer to take on weight-discrimination cases. This isn’t just a right-wing thing, either: “Fatphobia runs very deep and is especially entrenched in many ‘progressive’ communities,” Solovay says, pointing to animal rights organizations like PETA, which launched a campaign featuring “Chubby Charlie” trading cards that read, “Eat fat and you’ll be fat. Be kind to animals and to your butt and gut by avoiding fattening dairy products.” (See [www.milksucks.com/milksuckers.html](http://www.milksucks.com/milksuckers.html).)

## The “Whys” of Fatphobia

So how did the American public—from nurses to teachers to government officials to leftist activists—come to agree that “fat is bad”? It’s about early “indoctrination,” Glenn Gaesser says. Health texts in schools portray weight in the standard fashion, teaching kids that fat is a sure sign of health risks and acknowledging no evidence to the contrary.

It isn’t just about the assumptions that fat people are unhealthy or unattractive. Fatphobia is also caught up in American ideas of morality, notes Peggy Howell. “Under the guise of concern for our well-being, fat people are made to appear to be undisciplined, gluttonous, and slothful, and therefore worthy of ridicule and discrimination,” she says.

This supposed morality connection may heighten anti-fat fervor in the United States, where the thread of the Puritan work ethic—and the Puritan value system—still runs through the social fabric. The idea of working toward the goal of thinness crops up in virtually all weight-loss propaganda.

Obesity is even more likely to be portrayed as a moral failing when it’s linked to minorities and poor people, according to a recent study by sociologist Abigail Saguy of UCLA. As with alcohol, cigarettes, and drugs, even “official sources” tend to connect fatness with lower income. Some anti-fat articles and ads claim that working mothers—not to mention single working mothers—have contributed to the “obesity epidemic” by neglecting their families’ nutritional needs. Others argue that poor folks are more apt to choose quick fixes, like fast food and candy bars, when hunger hits—feeding into the stereotype that both fat people and poor people are lazier and less sensible than their size-four friends.

Money is tied to the obesity panic in an even more direct way, according to Marilyn Wann, who points to a profit-driven motive for the war on fat. “In the government, public health officials have a monetary interest in pointing fingers at two thirds of the population, because they get huge funding streams to combat dread ‘obesity,’” Wann says, adding that government researchers are often paid consultants for weight-loss companies like Weight Watchers, or for pharmaceutical companies that develop diet drugs.

## Fighting Fatphobia

With most of America—including many left-leaners—stuck in fatphobe gear, starting up a successful movement against legal weight

### The Fat Kid

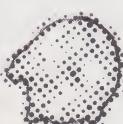
In building a new kind of body culture where all sizes are accepted, young people play an important role; as Glenn Gaesser mentioned, “early indoctrination” is a prime trigger of fatphobia. A Chicago program called Phat Camp targets kids and teenagers who question beauty standards—regardless of whether they call themselves “fat.” Like Big Burlesque and Creamy Goodness, Phat Camp incorporates creative arts, as

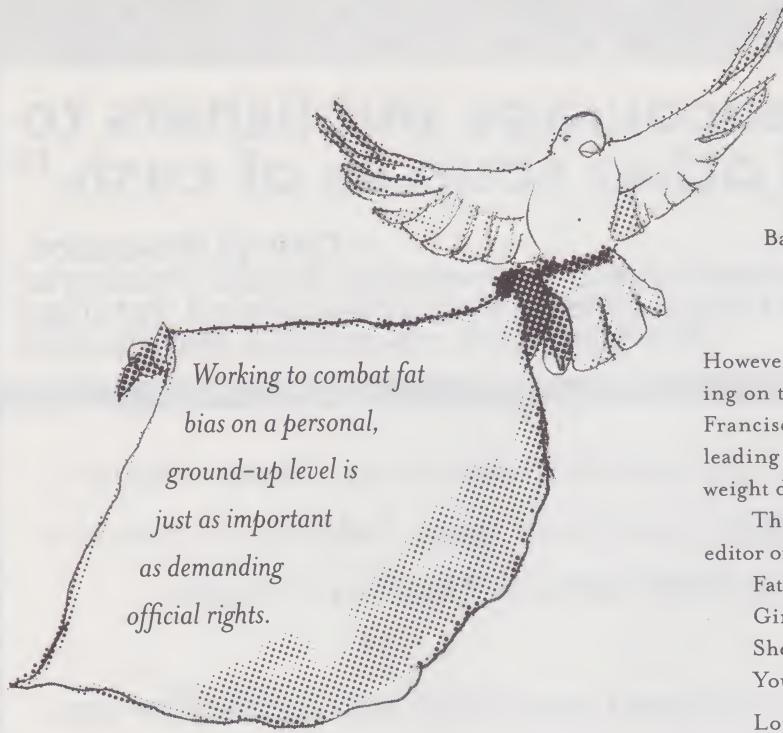
well as martial arts and therapeutic healing (one staff member is an acupuncturist). It also sponsors discussion groups for adults, addressing mind/body connections, food, health, sexuality and the media. Phat Camp aims to reach out to people of different genders, ethnicities, and socioeconomic levels, letting them share their stories and thinking about how fat oppression links up with other kinds of oppression.

Shira Hassan, founder of the camp, em-

phasizes the power of young people to change stereotypes and assumptions—even the ones that have been set down in law.

“Phat Camp believes that no government should tell you how to live in and be happy in your body,” Hassan says. “We hope to impact larger society by empowering youth to become leaders in their communities and supporting them in challenging the media and the government around them . . . as well as their friends and families.”





discrimination may seem next to impossible. Luckily, there are plenty of folks who don't feel that way—and luckily, some of them are influential psychologists and doctors. Claudia Clark, who heads the Association for Size Diversity and Health at Bowling Green State University, promotes a philosophy of "Health At Every Size" (HAES). Her organization provides info about nutrition and exercise, holding that becoming healthier is about lifestyle changes, not body-size makeovers.

"Naturally, there are things that are necessary to control," she says. "The spread of actual disease that really is a threat to life needs to be controlled. We HAES professionals have seen sufficient evidence in the research literature that body size and weight are not in that category."

HAES-minded psychologists and doctors hope to spread the word to other health professionals. It's slow going, Clark says, but more doctors are becoming open to treating large patients without including weight loss in their prescriptions. She notes that more funding for medical research on the subject—such as Glenn Gaesser's studies on weight and heart risk—could make a big difference in how professionals view fat.

But will this research sway the federal government toward a health policy that doesn't resemble a swimsuit competition? So far, activists have mostly concentrated on the more realistic goal of state-based advocacy. Weight-based discrimination is now illegal in San Francisco, Santa Cruz, Washington DC and the state of Michigan, according to Peggy Howell. It's a start. It's important to keep thinking big, though, Solovay says; as long as national pol-

icy advocates weight loss and ignores weight-based discrimination, smaller-scale policies are a lot less successful.

"These laws are good, but I would much rather see something federal so that protections from discrimination were universal and easier to enforce," Solovay says. "Right now discrimination that is illegal in San Francisco is perfectly legal on the other side of the Bay Bridge."

### You Know You Can't Hide From Fat Girl

However, on both sides of the bridge, there's a lot of resistance going on that doesn't involve banging on Congress's doors. In San Francisco and beyond, bands, dance troupes, and radical cheerleading squads are cropping up that specifically target issues of weight discrimination. In Wann's words, "Fat is punk rock!"

The band Creamy Goodness, headed by Max Airborne (also co-editor of *Size Queen*) infuses its lyrics with straight-up fat pride:

Fat Girl can't live out no Clark Kent lies  
Girdles, corsets, vertical stripes, there is no disguise  
She's omnipresent, she's an omnivore  
You know you can't hide from Fat Girl

Lots of folks aren't hiding from Fat Girl, these days. They're seeking her out at Big Burlesque, the Original Fat Bottom Revenue, a San Francisco erotic dance club where, as the *San Francisco Bay Guardian* puts it, "audiences get teased and pleased by ladies whose corsets runneth over."

Flashing some ample flesh may not seem a direct challenge to the upsurge of federal weight management. However, Cherry Midnight, a former dancer at Big Burlesque and a Bod Squad Fat Power cheerleader who co-edits *Size Queen* with Airborne, says that working to combat fat bias at a personal, ground-up level is just as important as demanding official rights; societal values and fashions aren't dictated by the government.

"There is no one road to social change, especially for unpopular causes that have big money on the other side," Midnight says, pointing to the pharmaceutical and diet industries, which have a keen interest in maintaining the super-thin ideal. "That is serious opposition. You gotta use the law, you need to have fun, you need to build a culture you want and actively create the world you want to live in."

This culture may begin as a counterculture—"fat communities" have begun cropping up in recent years, providing a space for fat people to be openly happy in their bodies. NoLose, a group for fat queers, holds conferences and retreats where members share their experiences, eat together, and even go to the pool—an activity that some women had never participated in before joining. NoLose is made up of writers, activists, performance artists, lawyers, doctors, academics, sex workers, dildo vendors, filmmakers, dancers—all tackling fatphobia from different fronts, says Devra Polack, the organization's outreach coordinator. A positive attitude doesn't hurt either.

"Fat people rule!" Polack says. "It's in our jeans."

Take that, FDA. ☺

## **"I'd encourage publishers to find other sources of cash."**

**—Cheryl Woodard,**

**Independent Press Association Board Treasurer  
on the future of Indy Press Newsstand Services  
(Punk Planet's newsstand distributor)**

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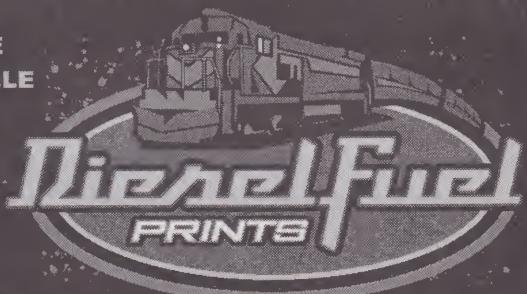
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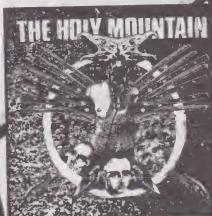
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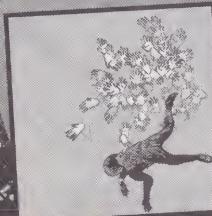
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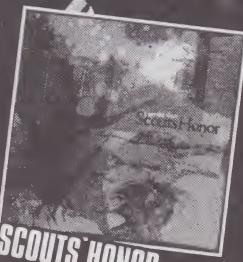
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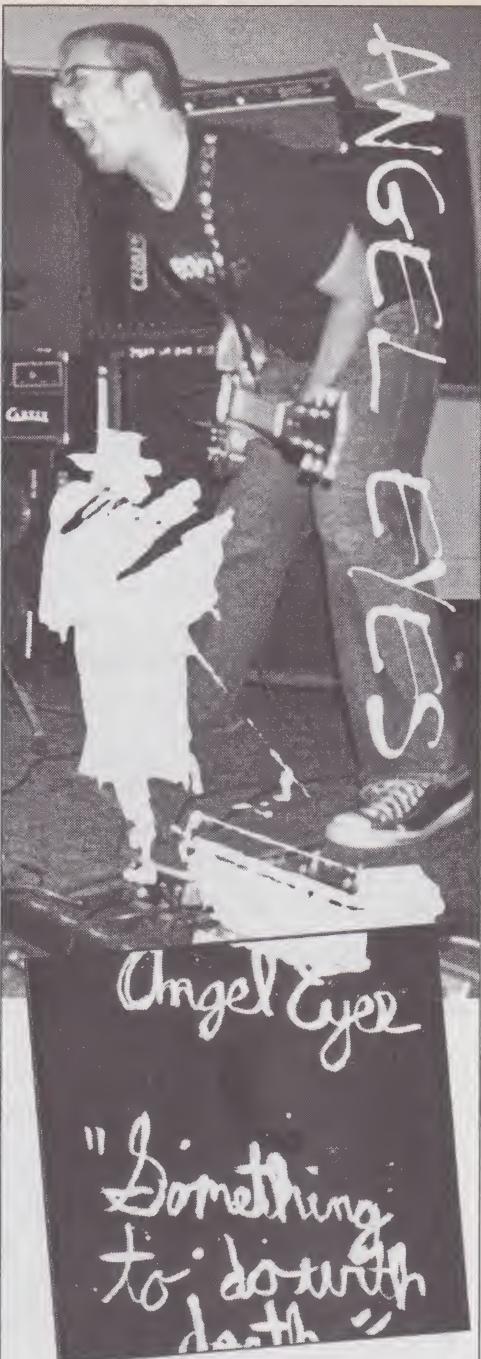
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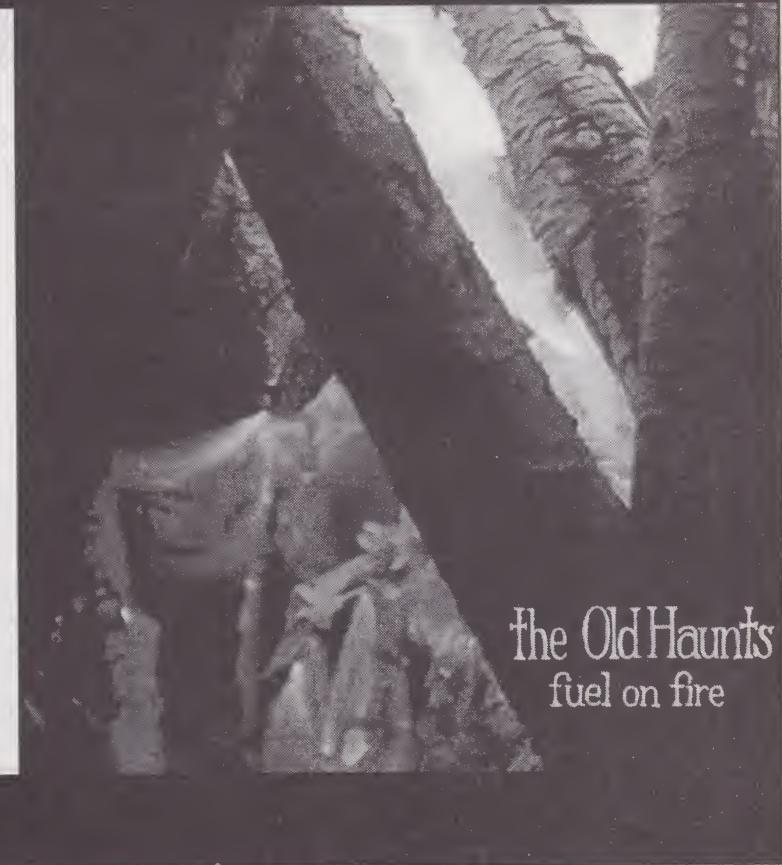


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# columns PP73

larry livermore  
nomy lamm  
al burian



wasn't the best of times for punk rock.

A handful of true believers kept forming bands and putting on shows in obscure venues that seemed to close down as quickly as they opened, often because of violence, vandalism, and the resultant attention from the police. The few bands that consistently drew large crowds tended to be of the thrash or speedmetal variety, and their audiences were the most violence and vandalism-prone of all.

Supposedly punk was completely passe by then. Depending who you asked, it died after the Sex Pistols' last show in 1978, or when the Mabuhay stopped doing shows in the early '80s, or when the scene was taken over by skinny-tied New Wavers with synthesizers. My brother, who'd been one of the first people I knew to discover punk back in 1976, sneered when I'd tell him about some gig I was going to.

"There's always gonna be a few diehards trying to keep the scene alive," he'd say, but one day in 1983 or '84 he agreed to come along with me to see if what I said was true, that the scene was as vibrant as ever, just more underground. The show we went to was so violent and so bloody that for once I ended up agreeing with him: if this was what punk had come to, I didn't want any part of it, either.

Around that same time I stumbled across a new DJ on KALX, our local college radio station. During the late '70s, KALX had been at the forefront of the new music scene, but it had since grown largely unlistenable. Most of the DJs dismissed classic melodic punk as "kid stuff" and had moved on to the new speedmetal sound or to an early version of politically correct multiculturalism, which disdained "white boys with guitars" as the ultimate oppressors.

The typical KALX "voice" was ponderous, sententious, and unbearably condescending, which was why it came as such a surprise when I heard Dr. Frank for the first time. For one thing,

he sounded as though he actually was in college whereas most of KALX's other "personalities" could have been auditioning for the NPR *Zombie Hour*. His voice dripped with adolescent sarcasm and scorn as he relentlessly skewered the sacred cows of the day and made his amateurism on the mic a central feature of his on-air persona rather than trying to cover it up with false gravitas.

He'd make a mockery out of public service announcements, slip in snide comments about campus events or gigs or bands that he thought unworthy of being taken seriously, and most of all, played the kind of music I loved and which had been largely absent from KALX. My friend Richard, who was playing bass in the punk-rock band I was trying to get started, had become a Dr. Frank fan, too, and one day at practice told me, "I went over to Berkeley and met that Frank kid. He's really cool."

Not too long afterward, I met "that Frank kid," too, along with his fellow DJs Kenny Kaos and Jon Von, who together with Frank seemed determined to resurrect or maybe even re-invent the whole notion of poppy punk music. Not content simply to play the stuff on the radio, Frank and Jon Von started their own band, the Mr. T Experience, and it wouldn't be unfair to say that with their first show in late 1985, they began laying the groundwork for the East Bay pop-punk sound that would eventually become famous around the world.

I was one of the early supporters of the Mr. T Experience, and as such was a member of a fairly exclusive club: at the first show I remember attending, I pretty much *was* the audience. But they soldiered on, built up a respectable fan base, and in 1986 impressed me immensely by putting out their own record. It gave me the inspiration to try the same thing, and I followed in Mr. T's footsteps when I started making records of my own, right down to using the same pressing plant, printers, recording studio and engineer.

As it happened, the Mr. T Experience eventually wound up on the record label I co-founded in 1987, and their producer/engineer, Kevin Army, played a crucial role in many of the records we released. The Mr. T Experience, while not nearly as active as they once were, recently celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as a band, which means they've outlived nearly all of the bands they helped pave the way for.

Meanwhile, apparently not content with going down in punk rock history, Dr. Frank has taken up a new career, that of author. *King Dork*, his first novel, comes out this spring, and while it's replete with the same iconoclastic spirit that's always characterized Frank's work, it's of a whole other order. Even at its best, the Mr. T Experience was always going to be a semi-underground phenomenon: its style and vernacular located it firmly within the punk rock scene, however unfair that might have seemed at times.

But *King Dork*, while ostensibly the tale of a preternaturally bright adolescent misfit who clearly has a bit in common with the young (and not-so-young) Dr. Frank, taps into far more universal themes, and as such could (and should) reach an audience far larger and more diverse than any of his punk rock records ever did.

Young Tom Henderson, aka "Chi-Mo" and/or "King Dork," is a tenth-grader at one of those industrial-grade suburban high schools ruled by "jabbering half-human/half-beast student replicants," where Advanced Placement Humanities consists of making collages and sampling "Foods of the World," and messianic baby boomers, aka "The Most Annoying Generation," endeavor to pass on their grooviness and sensitivity to packs of feral, drug-addled and oblivious students.

He and his best (as in only) friend, thrown together through alphabetical happenstance, take refuge in their semi-imaginary band, which changes names, personnel, instrumentation, album titles and songs on a more or less weekly basis. Through hook and crook the boys get their hands on some instruments and play one tumultuous show that changes their lives forever.

That's the centerpiece of a plot that also includes, in the narrator's words, "half a dozen mysteries, some dead people, naked people, fake people, teen sex, weird sex, drugs, ESP, Satanism, books, blood, bubblegum, guitars, monks, faith, love, witchcraft, the Bible, girls, a war, a secret code, a head injury, the Crusades, some crimes, mispronunciation skills, a mystery woman, a devil head, a blow job, and rock and roll."

But hilarious and enthralling as young Tom's adventures may be, *King Dork*'s most vital theme—and the one that should make it an enduring classic—is the challenge it lays down to baby boomer hegemony. "You stuck it to the old man, killed half of your brain cells and dumbed down the educational system: you are the greatest

generation," says Tom; he speaks for everyone who's sick to death of the self-righteousness and sanctimony of those who would have us believe that all of modern history and culture are but a footnote to the 1960s.

He periodically enlivens his tale with sardonic asides aimed at the Groovy Generation, but turns his full wrath and fury on one of the boomers' iconic texts, *Catcher In The Rye*. It's "every teacher's favorite book," it "changed their lives when they were young," they "carried it with them everywhere they went," he notes patronizingly, before adding, "I've been forced to read it like 300 times, and don't tell anyone, but I think it sucks."

Apparently he's not alone. During a recent family visit, my 16-year-old cousin saw my copy of *King Dork*, and wondered why the cover so closely resembled that of *Catcher In The Rye* (it's actually a defaced version of the original *CITR* cover). I explained, and asked if he'd ever been required to read *Catcher In The Rye*, and he practically spat out, "Man, I hate that book."

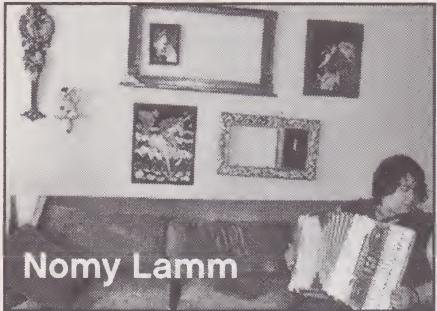
That night at dinner, he said, "Mom, Larry knows this guy who wrote a book that totally bags *Catcher In The Rye*. Will you please buy it for me?" Frank is clearly onto something here; in fact, I can easily see teenagers carrying *King Dork* around everywhere they go and, a couple decades from now, holding it up to their own children as "this great book that changed my life."

I wonder how Frank would feel if his book became an iconic text for a new generation, if one day kids are required to read it in school as an illustration of changing mores and values in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. It wouldn't surprise me at all if that happens; the book is that good, and the only people I'd like to see read it more than the kids of today are the members of my own generation, the much (and deservedly) maligned baby boomers.

And maybe 50 years or so from now, some kid, sick of being required to read *King Dork* in his Advancement Placement English class, tired of being told by well-meaning teachers that "this is the book that helped define a generation," will grow up to write his own anti-*King Dork*, challenging all the comfortable assumptions and preconceptions that will by then have grown up around it. I suspect that for Frank, that will come as the greatest tribute of all.

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Comments/questions/random praise or vituperation: llivermore@gmail.com. Want to read more of my thoughts about this, that and the other thing: larryllivermore.com.



Nomy Lamm

Day Lesbian Erotic Poetry Reading. I don't write erotic poetry. In fact I kind of hate erotic poetry. Or maybe that's just my Valentine's Day pessimist speaking. That stupid cheesy commercialization of generic affection, all it ever seems to do is reveal the emptiness of expectation. I'm glad my girlfriend doesn't fall for that shit. "I like chocolate, and I like flowers, but not on February 14," she informed me, alleviating any obligation to act like tonight is some super romantic event.

I'm planning to read an excerpt from my novel-in-progress, a semi-fictionalized story about having sex in Dave Matthews' roadie's bed. There's definitely some explicit detail that I guess could be construed as "erotic," but I'm more interested in exploring the emotional and psychological intricacies of sex and relationships, how we express and create and make boundaries and show ourselves to each other. As I practice reading the words out loud, I start getting freaked out, wondering if people are going to get turned on listening to it. I don't want them to. It's not about them. I don't want them getting that from me, unless they're paying me.

In the fading twilight I sit cross-legged on my bed in turquoise and hot pink lingerie pajamas, flipping through the pages of my manuscript, hoping it is at least good. I know I should stop obsessing and get up and get ready, but another part of me refuses to be motivated. What should I wear. I hate all my clothes. I wish I had more money. I should be working.

It's been hard to sign on to work lately. Last time I did, I only got two calls, both of them pedophiles. I fumed at the dispatchers for sending that energy into my world. I'll do a lot of things, talk about almost anything, but I can feel it when the man on the other end of the phone line is actually dangerous. My power is the ability to end the call, to block them out, to not have to be that little girl. "OK, well, call someone else," I said when the first guy kept asking "how little" I was and said he wanted to rape me. When the next guy started talking about drugging his granddaughters, I told him he was reporting a crime and hung up.

I was already feeling sensitive because I had just come back from the debut of a new documentary about women in Chicago's sex trade, called *Turning a Corner*. Before the show I had been hanging out in the lobby, eating free cheese cubes and trying to hand out flyers for the Sex Workers' Art Show, a traveling variety show made up of people from various parts of the industry.

"It's a benefit for the Young Women's Empowerment Project," I told a well-dressed middle-aged white lady, holding out the flyer for her. "The money raised will support young women and girls

involved in the sex trade and street economies."

"Thank you," she said, smiling uncomfortably and taking the flyer, backing away from me. I smiled back self-consciously, quietly judging her. I looked around, wondering about people's politics. What were their reasons for being there? I could project that they were all a bunch of do-gooders wanting to "save" people, but then I probably come off as a young, ignorant white sex radical who thinks it's hip to dabble in sex work. Not that they would be that far off. I am white. I am young, kind of, and a sex radical, I guess. I do phone sex as one of a number of things I do to bring in money, which could be construed as dabbling.

My ability to hang up the phone shows the difference between my experience and the women in the movie. As one of the panelists explained at the end of the evening, when asked why most of the women in the film were African-American: Women of color are usually the ones in the most vulnerable position, out working the streets. White women are generally in more protected environments. Still, she said "if you are doing phone sex, you are a prostitute. If you are having sex with your husband so he'll buy you nice things, you are a prostitute." I laughed in appreciation, glad that someone was pointing out to the packed house full of sympathizers that their lives are not so separate from the issues at hand.

I get dressed in bright red pants for my Valentine's Day commitment. Put my manuscript in my lime green bag and bundle up for the outdoors—fingerless gloves, handknit scarf, furry yellow tiger hat. I'm nervous to show up at the bar. Who will be there? I worry that my stuff isn't lesbian or erotic enough. I am not reading poetry about musky oysters and glistening pink pearls. I'm reading about neurotic, vulnerable shit. Dissociation, body dysphoria, s/m and roleplay, relationships that work for what they are, but are far from perfection. Standing at the bus stop in the cold I wish I had worn more clothes and hope that my girlfriend will be on the bus that's pulling up. She's not, but the bus is warm and gets me there on time.

Hardly anyone is here yet. I chat with a lesbian couple about my plans to leave Chicago. I ask the lady who's working the door if performers get free drinks and she buys me one. Pineapple and Southern Comfort. Delicious. Where's the stage? Is there even a microphone? I feel a part of me chickening out. What if what I'm doing is really not appropriate? What if even my friends don't like it? Will drinking make it better, or worse?

A few more people I know show up, and it starts to feel more like a movie set than a real bar, where all the same people show up and know each other and work on the same projects. Or maybe that's what bars are always like and I just don't know cuz I never go out.

"Did you go see that movie the other night?" My friend asks, referring to *Turning a Corner*. There has been quite a buzz about it.

"Yeah," I tell her. "It was a good movie. The women in it were amazing, and their stories were really intense. The whole film was critical of the legal system and the police, but the focus was definitely on 'exiting' the trade. It made me wonder how many people in the audience would have been open to those women if they were still active in the sex trade."

"Right," she says. "Like if you're 15 and your options are trade

sex for money or be put in a foster home, then maybe what you need is someone who will listen to you, not someone to 'save' you..."

"And I think the filmmakers and the women in the film are pretty clear on that. They were really honest about why people got involved in the first place, and all the obstacles to getting out. I just... wonder about the audience..."

I fade out, looking around at the growing crowd of people. Oh man I hope my girlfriend gets here soon. I need at least one person here who really knows me. I down my drink. I'm too broke to buy another one. Eye on the door, I scan every person who walks in. There she is. My nice, pretty girlfriend. Phew. We kiss hello and say nothing about Valentine's Day.

We sit down and the show starts. She offers to buy me a drink but I say no, at least not before I get on stage. "Oh, you're tipsy," she laughs at me, and I scowl. I don't like it when people can see that I'm not one hundred percent in control. My stomach gnaws at my gut and I fidget in my seat.

Nikki Patin does a great job as the host; she sings, reads poetry, gets excited and riles the audience even though there is no stage and the closest seats are facing away from her. A few people read stuff for the open mike. Another friend recites some funny rhyming poetry and sings a version of a Shirley Temple song, which she has rewritten as "Good Ship Riding Crop." (It's a lot less disturbing than the original.) I keep observing the audience, thinking about the marketing of sexuality and how it operates on so many different levels, what it means to participate in it, and what it's like to try not to.

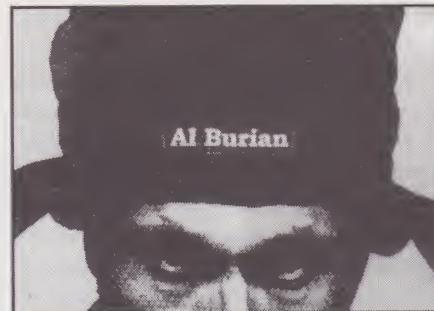
It looks like I'm going on last. Maybe people won't even listen. Maybe everyone will be too drunk to pay attention. I wonder if I can do it. What if I just can't? What if my body refuses to get up there? I give myself internal pep talks. Don't dissociate, I tell myself, be brave. You're not what they expect, but you came here to share something. Do it with dignity.

And now I'm back in my bed, the body of my sleeping girlfriend next to me. She has to work in the morning, and I need to write my column, but we still want to be around each other. A cheesy voice-over in my head says "... and that's what Valentine's Day is really about." I laugh at myself. It really is healthiest for me to make no big deal about these kinds of things. The reading was fine. Nothing spectacular. Afterwards a couple people told me they looked forward to reading my book, and one person thanked me for talking about dating trans-men, because they're currently in the process of transitioning.

The best response came from the lesbian who bought me that drink earlier on. "Wow, that was great," she said. "I can't even get up in front of people, let alone do what you did." Her eyes were all wide and she looked shaken. Just the way I like it.

I climb under the covers and my sleepy girl runs her hand across my back, rubbing the sore spots semi-consciously. "I'm proud of you," she murmurs. "You made yourself vulnerable, and people liked it."

I wrap my arm around her and fall inside myself, into spaces that nobody will ever own, spaces I hope to share when the time is right.



I have embarked on a voyage into a dark sphere of existence, sunk to a new low. I have entered the world of storage units. "Occupant waives

any claim for emotional or sentimental attachment to the stored property," reads my rental agreement at Lincoln Park Self Storage, where I am keeping my records, books, clothes, and everything I have ever written or drawn, among other items I am now contractually barred from having sentimental attachments to.

This brings up a philosophical quandary. When one identifies oneself as a "non-materialist," what else is there to hold on to but sentiment? Boxing up your belongings can be a jarring experience; all that emotional attachment, the abstract and unquantifiable meaning which gives things value, reduced to blankness, broken down to component categories—clothes, books, records, paper. It's like having a dead body suddenly on your hands. Just yesterday, it was breathing, living, telling jokes or wallowing in childhood hang-ups. Now it is inanimate: bones, skin and hair, an object taking up space.

Wandering the halls of the storage facility, one is struck by the silence, the vacuum of lifelessness, interrupted only occasionally by the creaking wheels of a handcart, shuffling someone's belongings in or out. Banks of video monitors in the office verify the lack of activity everywhere, like a high-tech mummy's tomb, filled with items for some later use, in the occupants' next incarnation. The clerk at the desk tells me about the weird things he's seen people store here: rooms full of worthless and water-damaged furniture, boxes full of children's toys, things which one only keeps because of the sentiment attached. He explains the clause in the contract: "It's just to protect us, in case, god forbid, someone runs amok with a flamethrower or something."

Up on the fourth floor, where my belongings are kept, there is a big bay window with a great view. Since moving my stuff here, I've had to come by on occasion to retrieve this or that item, and it is always nice, on a sunny day, to spend a few minutes staring out the window, at the gleaming towers of downtown. Summer is ending, soon to lurch into a season of eternal darkness, but for now the sky exudes the feeling of endless potential. On these occasions, I try to retrace my path, to figure out how I ended up here, wandering the blank, unsentimental halls like some disembodied wraith.

In the apartment I'd been living in until just recently, the gas bill had gone unpaid, running free and registered under "occupant" for nearly two years. One day, as the first hint of chill hung in the air, the gas was finally shut off. It was the final nail in the coffin of an already crappy apartment, and rather than pay the outstanding billions of dollars on two winters with the heaters cranked and the windows open, the household decided to disband. I had enough touring plans lined up for the fall that any new

place I moved into would be a de facto storage unit, and so I figured, why not just go all the way with it?

Having moved out of the living space, the only type of space I now occupy, other than storage, is practice, and I sometimes in fact make the mistake of referring to my storage space as my practice space, having to catch the slip by calling it my "practicing to be a person" space. It does seem a little unfair: my own body is not worthy of housing, apparently, but these unwieldy amplifiers and enormous speaker cabinets, many of whom are themselves in far less functional form than I, have somehow finagled their way into an air-conditioned room.

•••

Which brings me to my last category of material excess here on the physical plane: musical equipment. Though I am not even close to the upper echelons of excess when it comes to hoarding such gear, I do have my share, including a few objects that I cannot possibly lift and transport on my own. I don't like that feeling; it's like owning a bunch of refrigerators, or a herd of elephants. This physical fact, the sheer weight of it all, ties me already from the get-go to others, who will need to help me get the objects up and down the stairs. And from there the dependency only grows, because actually turning the devices on and making noises come out of them in the company of others will bind you to them, ensnare you in ways you could have never predicted, desired, or foreseen.

With music equipment, I tow my standard anti-material line, that as much genius is spewed from the speakers of cheap practice amps as there is uninspired, by-the-numbers aural wallpaper from professional backlines—it's the sentiment expressed, not the material means of expression, that's important. On the other hand, it's hard to deny that rock music is about 50 percent ability—what you are actually playing—and 50 percent tone. It's not hard to play the basic chords of an AC/DC song, but it will only sound like AC/DC through a Marshall amp. I can't deny that if I want to induce the slightly nauseating, chest-cavity rattling bass feeling which first gave me transcendental experiences when I stood in front of Mike Dean's speaker cabinet at the Brewery in North Carolina, circa 1985, I'm going to need an eight/ten speaker cabinet, literally about the size and weight of a small refrigerator. Nor can I deny sentimental attachments to the one I have, which was played that very same night in 1985 by one of the opening bands, and which I purchased a few weeks later, date of birth stamped on the back of the speakers, the cabinet born a few months before I was, in the spring of 1971.

On tour, the music gear will be stored under a wood-framed loft-bed, upon which I will not be able to sleep, because when I get up there I cannot help but morbidly obsess on the idea of the van flipping, and all that weight, all those thousands of pounds of gear, crushing me flat against the ceiling. At the same time, how can I not feel attachment to it all? Born in 1971, like me, the cabinet is a slightly off-brand, a Traynor, and I can identify with that too; it seems like the amp equivalent of the slightly wrong handmade down clothes I'd wear in junior high. The places we've been, the conversations we could have, the slightly nauseated feeling we've induced, all over the US.

Besides your own death, the other all-consuming fear of tour is having your gear stolen, an apocalyptic but unfortunately all-

too common occurrence. Bands that have their equipment stolen, in my experience, either succumb to that physical reality and disband, or persevere, and become stronger for it. They recognize their essential bandness as something amorphous, a common bond, a need for expression that transcends the means of transmission. You have to admire people with that much conviction in the non-material. Still, it must be a bizarre feeling: all of a sudden, you are a bunch of people, with a collective set of muscle memory, that, when actualized, would produce songs, only you've lost the means to take that step into the physical world. Is a singer who loses their voice still a singer? Is a band without equipment a band?

•••

My friend Tom, in North Carolina, came home one night to find his house engulfed in flames. Books, papers, clothes, records, musical equipment—and a huge, painstakingly assembled collection of films, occasionally screened around town, now lying on the pyre. Stacks of 8-millimeter, Super 8, and 16-millimeter reels, old educational films, clunky '50s propaganda, found arty weirdness, and his own projects; all of this evaporating before his eyes. The results of nothing so spectacular as a flame-thrower-wielding psychotic, Tom's house fire was the result of a halogen lamp tipping over. A simple, innocuous object, purchased for a few bucks at a thrift store, devoid of any value beyond its simple functionality, generating light and heat. It had destroyed everything. There was nothing to do now, but begin again.

Tom had a video camera with him and, not knowing what else to do, filmed. When watching the footage of the building, his home, dematerializing in a howling blaze of heat and light, one gets a vicarious sense of both the horror and the elation the fire must have elicited. Such a sight is a primal fear realized and the deepest, most unspoken wish fulfillment, both at once. Everything. Gone. My dad described the feeling of losing his own parents as having a weird kind of lightness, a lifting of weight he hadn't known was there. Within the horrible aloneness of shedding the only constants you've known your whole life there is something uplifting, a realization of self, of you being you, independent of anything outside of yourself. There is a freedom in being cut loose into the world, disconnected from bonds so familiar you would never have thought of them as binding until they ceased to be.

Were my storage space to be immolated, I would miss my clothes the least, certainly. The whole idea of sentimental attachment to clothing, though it applies to one or two T-shirts, does not, on the whole, make any sense to me. The books I might miss, although there are libraries in which I could find most of them, and I rarely reread books in any case, so that the shelf/cardboard box full of them is little more than sentiment, a bunch of spines within which you can book-end my identity, learn a little something about me as you peruse the shelf.

The boxes of papers have the lowest resale value and would be the quickest to burn, and I can scarcely conceptualize their loss. It's the closest I can imagine to my own eradication short of being caught in the burning building myself. Once, I misplaced a crate full of journals I'd been keeping for years. I searched for them for a few weeks, before conceding that they were gone, had

probably been thrown out or something. I keep notes on things mainly because my memory is bad, and I want to remember places and events. When I would look back on these writings, I was often astounded by how warped my memory was compared to what I had written down at the time. I'd find that my version of events was completely wrong, or discover details which I'd completely erased, which would have ceased to exist for me had I not made some record of them. Now, with this surrogate memory gone, I had to fundamentally re-envision my life. One wonders that one even bothers living if so little attention is going to be paid while you're doing it. Keeping those journals was a way of holding onto some form of basic truth, of what I had done and what I had thought of it. Now that they had disappeared, wasn't I erased too? Is a life without documentation a life at all? But, in some very small way, I felt that weightlessness that my dad had described. Even divorced of memory, of my own past, I was still somehow me. Now, the weight of holding on to what was behind me had been removed, and all that remained was the present and the unwritten future. Then the crate turned up, under a staircase or something, and there was that awkward relief relatives feel at a funeral when, in the middle of their grieving, the body sits up in the casket and proclaims itself to have only been napping.

And as for the records, well, these have been the subject of more than one late-night insomniac debate: if the house were to catch fire, which ones would I grab? Or would I just accept that the collection was lost, unsalvageable, and that the real question here was which one to put on and listen to last, as the smoke and flames crept closer? (Answer: probably Black Sabbath's "Black Sabbath," on account of the lyrics: "watch as those flames get higher and higher . . . oh no, please god help me! . . . noooooo!")

•••

Back in Chicago, early December. Walking the halls of the practice space on Superior and California. Listening to the cacophonous sound-montage of a million bands all playing at once, with black metal melding into ska melding into a cover version of Survivor's "Eye of the Tiger" as you walk down the hall, past the maddening schizophrenic din of dashed hopes and unachievable dreams, I am reminded of the silence in my storage space. Despite offering what would seem, on first listen, to be opposite sensory experiences, the basic gist of both buildings is the same. The noise, like the silence, makes the listener feel generic. Just as my boxes of papers are stripped of meaning by being placed in proximity with everyone else's boxes of molding personal items, it is difficult to keep your own personal motivations for making music in mind when you are confronted with the demographic overview. You catch glimpses of rooms covered floor to ceiling in splayed-crotch centerfolds, outside of which loiter guys with special contact lenses designed to make their pupils look like goat eyes, stroking their pony-tails and eagerly discussing the terms of a recording contract or the load-in time at some local club. These people are your fellow musicians, you realize, dreaming the same dream as you.

While it can be fun to travel the country and sleep in a van or on a friends' couch, it is not nearly as good a time to come back home and sleep in a van or on a friends' couch. All that freedom

starts to feel like martyrdom. I find myself hanging out at the practice space at odd hours, often very early in the morning, when it's still relatively quiet—and sometimes, around nine o'clock, somewhere down the hall, I'll hear an alarm clock go off. Someone is living in their practice space, waking up early to go to work, or to just get out of there before the noise becomes unbearable. The sound of that alarm seems unfathomably depressing. What could be worth it, what could be going on in that person's life to make such a level of discomfort seem sensible and the best option? This person, like me, seems committed to the path of most resistance.

Tonight, for some reason, Tony Lazzara and I have decided to play a show at an art gallery—spontaneous, semi-improvisational, and "just for fun," as we keep insisting, implying with the phrase some other, more insidious motive one might have for such behavior. In truth, I haven't had one second of fun, from the pure terror of booking the show and having it confirmed without having any idea of what to perform, to enlisting Tony as the drummer, to our hasty and nerve-wrackingly scant practices. Now, as we pack up our gear and prepare to carry it down four flights of stairs, things seem less party-atmospheric than ever, and Tony reminds me that we have kept in the spirit of the thing as we'd originally discussed it: we have kept it fun and are doing it just for the sake of the music. I don't remember having had this conversation, but have to concede that it sounds like the kind of thing I'd probably say. Our mutual friend Casey has volunteered to help carry the Traynor cabinet down the stairs. "I just came along because I like lifting things," he jokes. "I like the lifestyle."

Outside the space, we grit our teeth against one of the coldest nights of winter so far this year—and then can't help laughing at the futility of what we're involved in. When we get to the staircase we'll have to climb, at the art gallery across town, we'll laugh even harder. Anything worth doing, the axiom seems to be, is about 10 times more effort than the results will warrant. Your most sensible option, in terms of effort-to-happiness ratio, is probably to stay at home. Home? This is where the anti-material ideology breaks down, reveals itself to have been secretly renting a storage unit full of childhood doo-dads and oversized stuffed animals, while standing on the street corner in a loin-cloth pretending to possess nothing. There is a difference, after all, between playing air guitar and playing guitar: the guitar. And the amp. And the enormous speaker cabinet. And learning to play the guitar. And then carrying all that stuff somewhere. It's all so much more difficult than it should be. What sounded like spontaneous outbursts of sound and feeling on the records has revealed itself, over time, to be the product of astounding amounts of labor, blown speakers, money down the drain, lives wrecked, vans loaded and unloaded, back problems, knee injuries, etc. etc. To what end? Once you get that speaker cabinet up the stairs, your reward will be that you might briefly get to forget about the stairs you'll have to go back down. Tonight I'll get it, the feeling of blast-off, transcendence, a breaking of the bonds that tie me to the mundanity of the objects. The trick is to make it appear effortless, to create an illusion so powerful that it's ideological, that it conveys your irrational ordering of the world, a world without weight, enough so that you fool everyone, and perhaps even fool yourself. And then it's back down the stairs. ☺

## Craig's

by Megan Stielstra

**H**ere's the thing: I make nine dollars an hour copying keys at Ace Hardware. That's a thousand a month after taxes. Subtract whatever for bills and there's not much left for extras, let alone emergencies. Say your transmission blows, or you need a root canal, or, in my case, you get in trouble and it costs 400 dollars to fix even at Planned Parenthood which is supposed to be all cost-effective but I'm not some CEO or one of those Hilton sisters who can just charge their way out of a mistake. I mean, I save coupons! I go to Supercuts! I shop off Craig's List! You know, the website where everybody sells their stuff all crazy cheap?

### STUFF I GOT OFF CRAIG'S LIST

1. Dining room table \$40
2. Five dollar CTA card \$4.50
3. Unopened 20-pack Colgate \$14
4. Bluebird paperweight, 10 cents.

Not like I needed a paperweight, but 10 cents? You can't pass that up! I carry it in my pocket and grip it when I think I'm losing my mind. Like when Gary left, I squeezed that bluebird so tight the beak cut into my palm.

5. Size-10 lady's whole closet, free. I guess she died—leukemia—and her husband couldn't handle it. *Please take ASAP*, said the post. *I don't want to remember anymore*. She liked the fancy stuff, this lady. I got a cashmere trench coat that goes all the way to the floor. Sometimes, when it's slow at work, I imagine millions of keys lining the inside of that coat. I imagine riding the El and suddenly it screeches to a stop and all the lights go off. Something terrible is about to happen, we'll be exploded by a meteor or beheaded by terrorists or something, and everyone is screaming and banging on

the doors but I remain calm. I reach into my trench coat. I pull out a key. It glows softly in the dark and people back away in awe—"Look, Mommy, we're saved!" cries a small, freckled child—as I unlock the locked door and lead everyone to safety.

Sounds ridiculous, I know, but when you spend 40 hours a week doing the same thing—find the key code, line up the keys, grind—you're really spending 40 hours in your mind. Forty hours thinking, and in my case it's better to imagine impossible stuff than replay reality, 'cause, I'll tell you what, the reality is sort of shitty. The reality is Gary, still wearing his Pep Boys uniform, sitting across from me at our Craig's List dining-room table. His right leg bounces like it does when he's nervous.

"How can you be pregnant?" he asks.

I think of that video from sixth grade biology with the cartoon sperm narrating how babies are made. "I don't know," I say, reaching into my pocket and grabbing the bluebird.

Gary's knee bangs into the underside of the table. "Was it that time the condom broke?" he asks. "Or when we got drunk? Or—"

"Gary," I interrupt, because we're supposed to be talking about stuff that will help us make a decision.

Except it was already made.

"He told you *what?*" said my sister Adelle. She goes to community college and is right now taking a Womyn's Studies Class, where they spell *women* with a Y.

"To get rid of it," I said.

"And what did you say?"

"Nothing," I said, which got her all sorts of worked up. She talked like there

was a whole press corps in her living room. "When are you going to stand up for yourself, Jeanie? When are you going to face these years of oppression and say to them, 'Years, I will not be held back! This is the 21st century and I can, nay I *will* do it all! I will work my job and feed my young and wear a skirt while doing so because—'"

"I don't even know what you're talking about," I told her, so she got off her fake pedestal and asked what I was going to do.

"I already did it," I said. "I went to Planned Parenthood last week." That's when I started to cry. Saying it aloud made me remember—The waiting room. The paper robe. The "You'll feel some discomfort"—so I tried to think about something else. Adelle has this big fireplace and I imagined that inside it was a door. I go to it, and then, I reach inside my coat and pull out a key and unlock the door and stretching out before me is a whole starry universe and all I have to do is walk through and I'll be somewhere else. Somewhere away.

Adel patted my shoulder. "You need to protect yourself," she said. "In case this happens again."

Starry universe, starry universe, I thought, rubbing the bluebird with my thumb.

"You should really go on the pill."

I don't have 50 bucks a month for the pill. So I did like I did with the dining-room table and went online to Craig's List.

### PILL 4 SALE CHEAP

Reply to: [loopdloo@yahoo](mailto:loopdloo@yahoo)

My insurance thinks I have a uterine bleeding problem so I pay 10 dollars for Ortho Tri-Cyclen. My husband and I don't need it because he got a vasectomy. We need money we are saving for a new deck. Will sell 20 dollars per. The Beachwood, Sunday night, 10 pm I have red hair.

OK, I know. It's shady as all hell. But you've got to understand: I couldn't let it happen again.

The Beachwood is a bar over by the Jewel. It's a dive for sure, all dark, peeling plaster and neon signs. Gary and I went there sometimes 'cause the beers were cheap, but I never saw any other customers. The bartender was over sixty, with red lipstick colored outside the lines. She never said a word, just held up fingers for however many dollars we owed her. Gary would watch TV and I'd imagine pulling a key out of my coat and leaning across the bar. I insert it between the bartender's red, red lips and suddenly she starts talking, same as those dolls that need their strings pulled.

"Can I ask you something?" she says, her voice two-packs a day.

"Sure," I say.

"What'cha doing with this guy?" she nods her head at Gary, who's lost in whatever's on. We haven't spoken in hours. We haven't spoken in months and I am alone in an empty bar.

But that night, it's not empty. That night, 10 pm on Sunday, I went to the Beachwood and could barely squeeze in it was so packed. I wondered if it was a bachelorette party or something, 'cause everybody in there was a woman.

"What's going on?" I asked the lady pressed into my right. She had green hair and a tattoo on her neck.

"I don't know," she said. "I'm here for the pill."

"Me, too," said the girl to my left. "You see any redheads?"

"Hang on," I said. "Is everybody here for the pill?"

Lots of people heard that question, even over Smooth Criminal on the juke-

box. A chorus of "Yeah's" and "I am's!" came from all around me—the soccer-moms in Capri pants, the college students, sweatshirts embroidered in Greek, the teenagers, wide-eyed, watching their backs—and from there the voices erupted.

"Who's gonna get it?"

"Me, I need it!"

"Everybody needs it!"

"Where's that fucking redhead?"

They got louder, girls all up in each other's faces, heads whipping from shoulder to shoulder like that's *MY Ortho-tri-fucking-cyclin* and I thought of movie scenes where the crowd panics and tramples itself to death. In the midst of it all, a woman stood on the bar and yelled, "Everybody, listen up!" She wore a business suit, the skirt high on her thighs from climbing. Women like her came into Ace Hardware for Do-It-Yourself catalogues. "Is the person who posted on Craig's List here?" The group went quiet. Everyone looked around. "OK," said the woman after a few seconds. "We got screwed. We should all go home and—"

"Fuck that!" yelled somebody in the crowd. "We came for the pill and we're leaving with the pill!"

Everybody cheered, and somebody yelled, "How?"

"There's a clinic right up the street!" yelled somebody else. "They've got tons of samples!"

It was well past midnight by that point, so maybe a couple hours of drinking had done its job. Maybe it was that freak mentality you see on the news. Or maybe all the women in that bar had a story like mine, one we were trying to forget. Whatever the reason, we moved as one through the street that night. Old and young, ugly and beautiful and scarred. I was near the front of the crowd, close enough to hear

the girl who first reached the clinic door yell out what we all must have known anyway: "it's locked!"

I know. What I should've done was walk away, but what I did do was walk forward towards that door. In my head, I'd pictured this moment a thousand times: I open my trench coat and the inside is lined with keys, all identical-looking, and I grab one of them—to the untrained eye it would seem random, but me? I know. I am the Keymaster, the Asian guy in the second Matrix, I can unlock a goddamn dimension if I have to!—and I take the key and put it in the lock and lead us into that clinic. I have another key to open the cabinets and hundreds and hundreds of free samples rain onto the floor and we pack them into backpacks and rush off through the night, thrusting the little plastic cases into the hands of women on the way. I got so excited in that fantasy that I forgot the truth of it all: the math and the broken condom and the 50 dollars a month, all these girls showing up in some bar and me with my imagination.

I didn't have any keys. But I did have that bluebird, heavy and pulsing in my pocket, and I slammed it against the clinic's front window. Slow-motion slow the glass cracked into a giant spider-web and as I watched it go I thought, "I will not be held back!"

---

Megan Stielstra is a writer, teacher and waitress living in Chicago. She edits Sleepwalk magazine and is artist-in-residence for Barefoot Productions where she creates collaborative storytelling with musicians and filmmakers. She's performed for Storyweek, 2nd Story, Undershorts Film Festival, Piece by Piece, and the Dollar Store. Her work has appeared in Venus, Otium, and *The 2nd Hand*.

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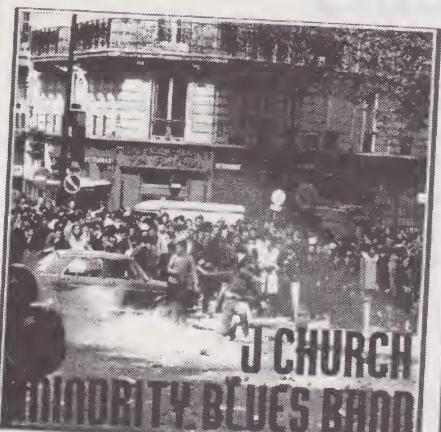


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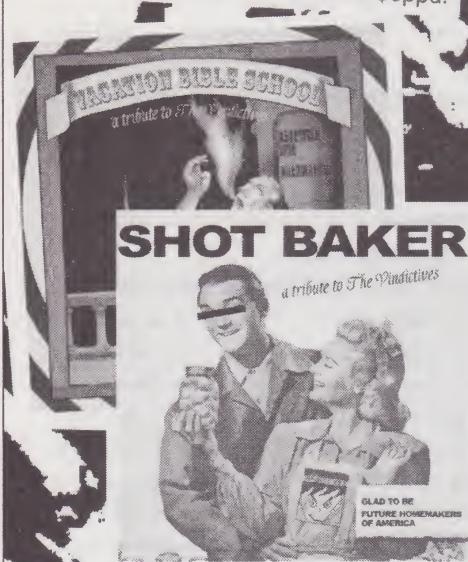
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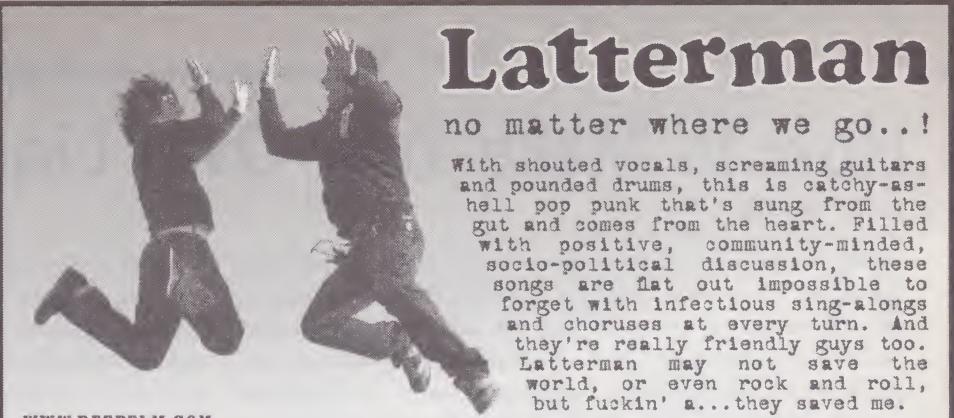


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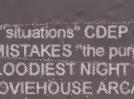
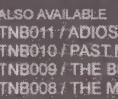
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# How to Make Your Own Liqueurs

By Vito Nusret

**R**um Runners and Booze Barons rejoice, because in this installment of the "The DIY Files" you'll learn how to make your very own liqueurs! Now you might say, "I've heard of liquor, but what's a liqueur?" Well, a liqueur is typically defined as an alcoholic beverage sweetened, or strongly flavored, with fruits or aromatics that is often served in small quantities after dinner or in very large quantities if you're looking to class up a three-day bender. In either case, homemade liqueurs can be a delicious do-it-yourself way of imbibing spirits. They come in such wide variety, you may be tempted to try them all. And you very well could, because making these beverages at home is much more cost effective than purchasing them at a bar or liquor store—and they make great gifts. So without further ado, here are a few of my favorite liqueur recipes:

## Italian Limoncello

This tasty liqueur, although it takes some time to prepare, is fairly simple to make. The required ingredients are one handle of your favorite 100 proof vodka, four cups of sugar, five cups of water, and fifteen fresh lemons. You can alter each ingredient to your tastes, but the general recipe is as follows:

1. Wash lemons with a vegetable brush under hot running water to remove any residue of pesticides or wax.
2. Carefully zest or peel lemons with a zester, peeler, or knife, making sure that there is no white pith attached to the peel.
3. In a gallon jug, pour 750 mL (or half of the handle) of vodka and add 15 lemons worth of lemon zest.
4. Cover the mixture and let it sit at room temperature for a minimum of 10 days to allow the flavors to blend together.
5. After your 10-day settling period, place the jug in a cool dark place (i.e., refrigerator, wet sack, basement, etc.) for 40 days.
6. After 40 days, combine four cups of sugar with five cups of water in a large saucepan and heat until thickened to a syrupy consistency (approximately five to seven minutes of medium heat).
7. When the syrup cools, add it to the mixture of vodka and lemon zest along with an additional 750 mL (the other half of the handle of vodka) and return the concoction to a cool dark place for another 10 to 40 days.
8. After this final rest period, strain out the solid lemon zest and bottle the remainder of the solution, which is now a gallon of delicious Italian Limoncello. Keep the bottle in the freezer until you are ready to serve it.

Note: If lemons are not your flavor of choice, substitute oranges and follow the same proportions and recipe to make *Orangecello*.

## A quick tip about Vodka

It's common knowledge that cheap vodka can be abrasive to the taste buds; even veteran drinkers wince at the thought of a shot of straight Skol or McCormick. However, this problem can be remedied if you happen to own a home water filter. By merely running the liquor through

the filter (usually a Brita water filter jug) a number of times you can filter out impurities and improve the overall taste of the vodka making your Skol taste more like a Ketel One. Keep in mind that it takes several cycles to noticeably improve the taste of the alcohol. Also, studies have indicated that this filtering method reduces the effects of a hangover. Filtering is not just restricted to vodka; any cheap liquor can be filtered to improve taste, reduce impurities, and reduce the risk of hangover!

## Cherry Bounce

Here's another effortless liqueur recipe in which the marinating process is essential; however, the drink will be well worth the wait. All you need is two quarts of fresh cherries, four cups of sugar, and one quart of brandy (although you can substitute your favorite alcohol). The recipe for Cherry Bounce is brilliantly simple:

1. Deposit all ingredients into a one-gallon airtight container (failing that, any container with a tight lid), and seal.
2. Stir mixture twice daily in order to dissolve sugar and coat cherries in alcohol.
3. When sugar is completely dissolved, let the mixture sit for at least six weeks.
4. After the six-week rest period you'll have cherry flavored brandy and brandy flavored cherries!

## Galliano Liqueur

Anyone who has ever ordered a Harvey Wallbanger knows that Galliano can get pretty pricey. Well, there's no reason to lament and settle for Screwdrivers any longer, because now you can make Galliano Liqueur at home with just a little time and a little know-how. This recipe requires a bit more in the ingredients department compared to Cherry Bounce or Italian Limoncello: you'll need two cups of water, one cup of white corn syrup, a half-cup of sugar, two to three drops of yellow food coloring, one and a half cups of 188 proof grain alcohol, six drops of anise extract, and two teaspoons of vanilla extract, all of which can be found in your local supermarket or whole food store. Once you have the ingredients, the rest is a snap:

1. Pour two cups of water, one cup of white corn syrup, and a half-cup of sugar into a pot and boil for about five minutes.
2. Turn off heat and add two or three drops of yellow food coloring, one and a half cups of 188 proof grain alcohol, six drops of anise extract, and two teaspoons of vanilla extract, while stirring the mixture the whole time.
3. Cover the solution and let stand a recommended one month before serving (but for you instant gratification types, this liqueur is essentially ready to drink upon cooling).

Well, there you have it folks: three simple liqueur recipes that are certain to impress. So cook a nice meal, light a few candles, and break out the homemade hooch for a fancy dinner party . . . without breaking the bank! ☺

# DIY sex EARLY TO BED

by sex lady searah

## Sex Lady Travelogue: Hating my Life at the Exotic Erotic Ball

10:04am

**W**hat the fuck was I thinking?" I'm saying to myself as I sit behind the folding table that cost me \$1250 to rent. I am at the 26th Annual Exotic Erotic Ball in San Francisco, a brilliant idea of mine to combine work and pleasure: take a trip to SF, see my girlie and spend a couple of days making mucho moolah at this yearly event for sex freaks. At the time it seemed like a good idea. Now I sit here wondering what medication I was on when I made that decision.

This event, while certainly about sex, which is what I am all about, is still somehow incredibly far from what Early to Bed is about. To the left of me are sweet but stoked guys who sell nothing but Mardi Gras beads to men who like to buy a little tit-action with them. This is what these guys do for a living *all the time, year-round*. Across from me is a M/F couple in a minimalist booth that sells a pill "guaranteed to enhance male sexual performance" and three frighteningly bubbly ladies who have a sex-toy party company. There are also lots of corset makers, sleazy club-shirt sellers and even more people selling Mardi Gras beads. But right smack in front of me is a man in his 50s (looking a little too much like my mom's husband) wearing nothing but a flimsy loin cloth, a black fanny pack and those waterproof suede shoes from Land's End. I can see his nuts just barely peeking out from the loin-cloth (I wasn't trying to see them, I swear) and I just got to watch be turned down on for a schlong painting at the body painting booth. So sad.

Other than loin-cloth man, there are very few non-vendors in this huge, cold warehouse and almost all the people that are here are men (who look over 40 at least) or cheap looking women with a lot of fucking cleavage (not that I ever mind cleavage). But the real horror for me at this moment is the two jumbo video screens showing scenes from the last years of the Ball. Now, I'll admit that I knew this wasn't personally my scene, but I didn't think I could possibly be so offended by displays of sexuality. I mean, for fucks' sake, I own a sex shop! But still, after watching hours and hours of videos featuring women with no tops licking each other's boobs for the enjoyment of men dressed up as garbage cans and Homer Simpson, I am about to lose my mind. I would be less irritated I suppose if I was making any money, but barely anyone is looking at my very carefully selected display of quality sex toys and goodies. People don't seem to want to listen to an angry fat feminist dyke lecture them on the proper use of lube. They would apparently

rather pay some silicone-injected hot chick \$20 for the privilege of kissing her tight ass. Go figure.

12:42 pm

Oh god, the guy in the loin-cloth is now wearing nothing but the fanny pack and I am horrified that he might come any closer to me. Where is security when you need them. Oh yeah, that's right, he is allowed to do that. Here is one thing I have learned about naked men in my 4 years at the job: if you are in a public space and there is a man walking around naked (and you aren't at a nudist camp) I guarantee you he is walking around alone. I have never seen a naked man in public who wasn't ignored. It almost makes me a little sad for them. Almost.

3:36pm

A cute French boy in his 20s chats with me for a while and then asks, "Can I make you a kiss?" What the hell, I've had worse offers.

6:00pm

The big draw for this afternoon is supposed to be porn mogul Larry Flynt receiving the first ever Exotic Erotic Lifetime Achievement Award (whoo-fucking-hoo). I'm a little excited to see and hear this famous guy, I must admit. At least it will be 10 minutes I don't have to watch women performing lesbianism for men on the video screens. But no, it turns out to be the most awkward, uncomfortable 10 minutes yet, and I am at least 60 feet from the stage. You can barely make out any of Flynt's grumbly words and the only question this lame-ass bunch of losers can come up with is "So do you still hang out with Woody Harrelson?" I am ashamed to be here.

6:04pm

The sex-toy party girls across from me have blown up a huge inflatable penis and boob. They are drawing a huge crowd now. I am still sitting alone.

7:13pm

Loin-cloth boy has some competition in a new arrival: pasty old white dude in nothing but aqua socks and a devil mask. Why aqua socks? There is no water here.

9:45pm

Fuck it. I am leaving. These is nothing sexy about this place, I've made \$57.00 and all I want to do is go cuddle with my natural-bodied, Land's End-shirt-wearing feminist, dyke girlfriend. And not look at any more old-man penises for a while. ☺

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# DIY food

EVERYTHING THAT EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

**A**fter numerous trips to my local produce stand, I finally gave in to curiosity and picked up a papaya. I walked right past those pear-shaped fruits many times over, along with the lusciously packaged halved fruit baring its orange skin and ominous black seeds. Exotic tropical fruits are luxuries for northerners and, often, tricky to choose a good tasting one, but when you do, I found it's worth it.

Papayas are a tropical fruit, spherical or pear-shaped that can be found up to 20 inches long, though they're usually about six to eight inches in length. The flesh is richly orange or pink, depending on the variety, with a taste that's musky, sweet and juicy, similar to a cantaloupe. Its texture is soft and butter-like—perfect for baking or pureeing. Papayas have an inner cavity full of round black seeds encased in a gel-like substance. The seeds are edible, tasting like a bitter black pepper. In India the seeds are sometimes substituted for whole black pepper.

Nutritionally, the papaya is rich in antioxidants, particularly vitamin C, along with B vitamins and folate. It is also a sufficient source of potassium, magnesium, iron and calcium. Papain, an enzyme found in the fruit and other parts of the papaya tree, is now mass-produced for its various uses. It is most concentrated when extracted from the unripe fruit. The enzyme helps digest proteins and is an essential ingredient in dietary supplements for digestion. It's also been used to treat mild sports injuries and allergies. Other various uses for the enzyme include treating wool and silk before the dyeing process, removing hair from hides before tanning, clarifying beer and as an ingredient in toothpastes, cosmetics and chewing gum.

Papain is also used to tenderize meat, where it essentially breaks down tough meat fibers. It is a vital ingredient in powdered meat tenderizers. Meat can be prepared with a chunk of green papaya rubbed directly on the meat, or thrown into the cooking process as a tenderizer. Crushed leaves of the plant are also used to wrap meat before preparation for the same effect. Fairly recently, cattle have been injected with papain before slaughter.

Tropical folk medicine utilizes the unripe papaya and its seeds to induce abortion. Dried leaves are smoked to relieve asthma or used as a tobacco substitute. A tea infusion of the leaves may also cause abortion and is used for stomach ailments in Africa.

Once considered exotic, papayas are native to Central and

South America. Spanish and Portuguese travelers brought papayas to the tropics, India, Asia, and Africa. Christopher Columbus called it the "fruit of the angels." Papayas were brought to the US and cultivated in Hawaii, a major producer since the 1920s. The US, Mexico, and Puerto Rico are the largest global commercial producers of the fruit.

Of the two general types of papayas, Hawaiian and Mexican, the pear-shaped Hawaiian variety is most commonly found in US markets. The pear-shaped green fruit has a yellow skin when ripe. These fruits are also easier to harvest, with plants growing less than eight feet tall. Mexican papayas are much larger, weighing up to ten pounds with a yellow, orange or pink flesh.

An unripe papaya should never be eaten raw for its latex content, or papain. It must be first peeled, seeded and boiled until tender. Frequently, this papaya is served as a vegetable—like the common papaya salad from Thai restaurants. For export, green papaya is generally canned in sugar syrup, most likely hailing from Puerto Rico. Here, they have devised a seemingly dangerous method of peeling the unripe fruit in a lye bath. This is similar to the process used on canned black olives—hastening the ripening process, or color in this case, with a lye bath. Both serve to speed the production process.

The leaves of the papaya plant are also eaten. In the East Indies they are cooked and prepared like spinach. If mature, the leaves are bitter and must be boiled in many changes of water to remove the bitterness before eating. In Asia and Indonesia, the male flowers are also eaten in the same way as mature leaves.

With the many preparations of the different forms of papaya, a ripe one is best. This papaya is best eaten fresh by peeling, seeding and simply slicing into wedges. Serve the slices chilled with a wedge of lemon or lime. A few papaya seeds can be left on the slices, though not too many should be eaten, if a peppery flavor is desired. The flesh can be cut up into fruit salads, or used for baking. Papaya bread is common in the West Indies. The fruit is also used in compotes, served over ice cream or shortcake, and can be added to ice cream before freezing. Papayas can also be used in pies, pickles, or preserves. Papaya juice and nectar are another form of the fruit and available bottled or canned. In any form a ripe papaya provides a delicious alternative to your usual fruit snacks. ☺



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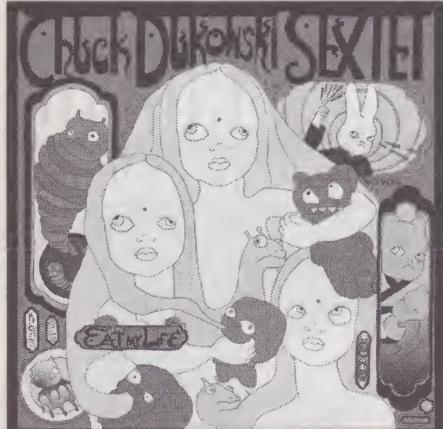
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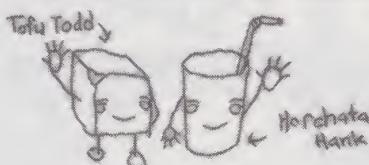
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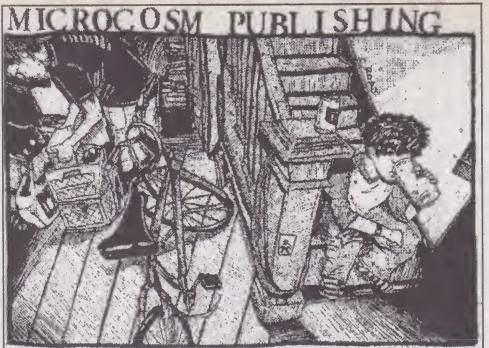
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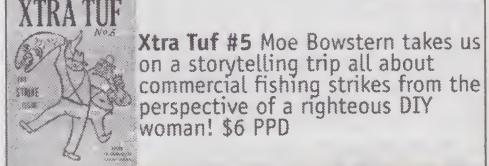
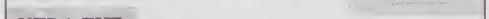
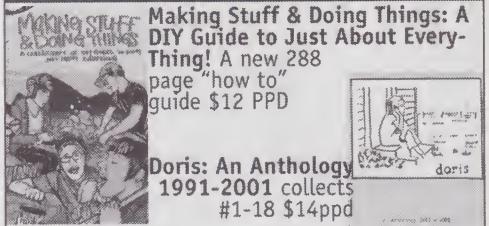
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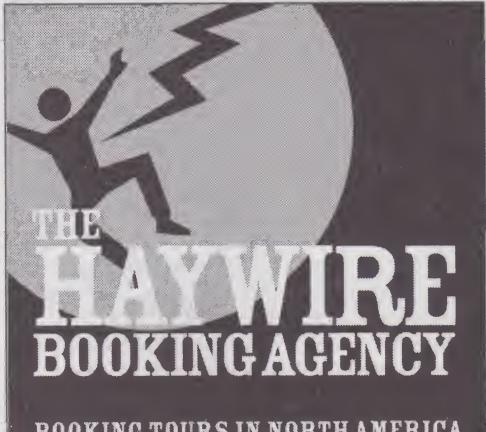
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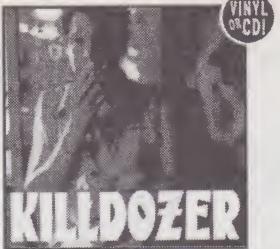
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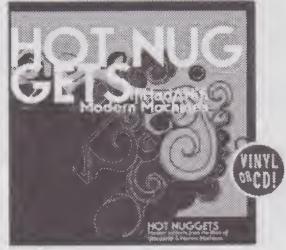
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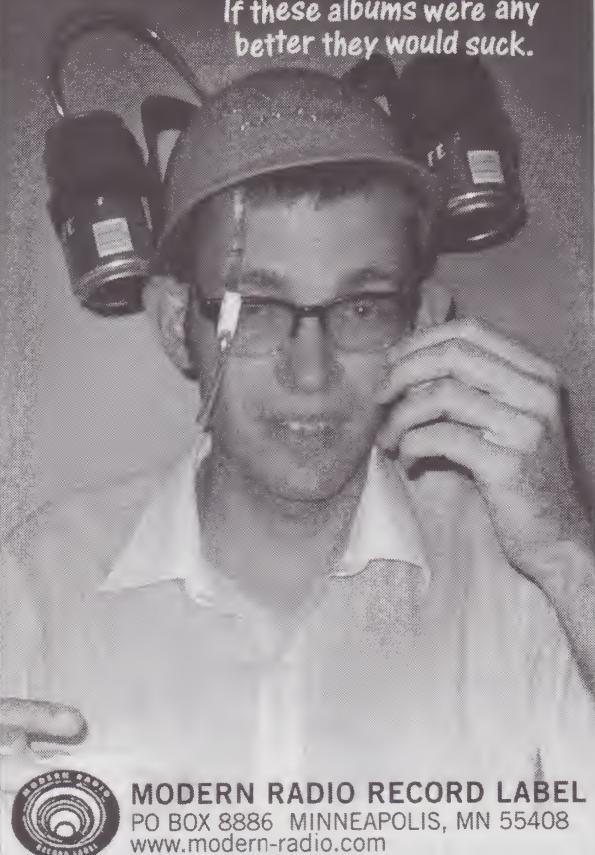


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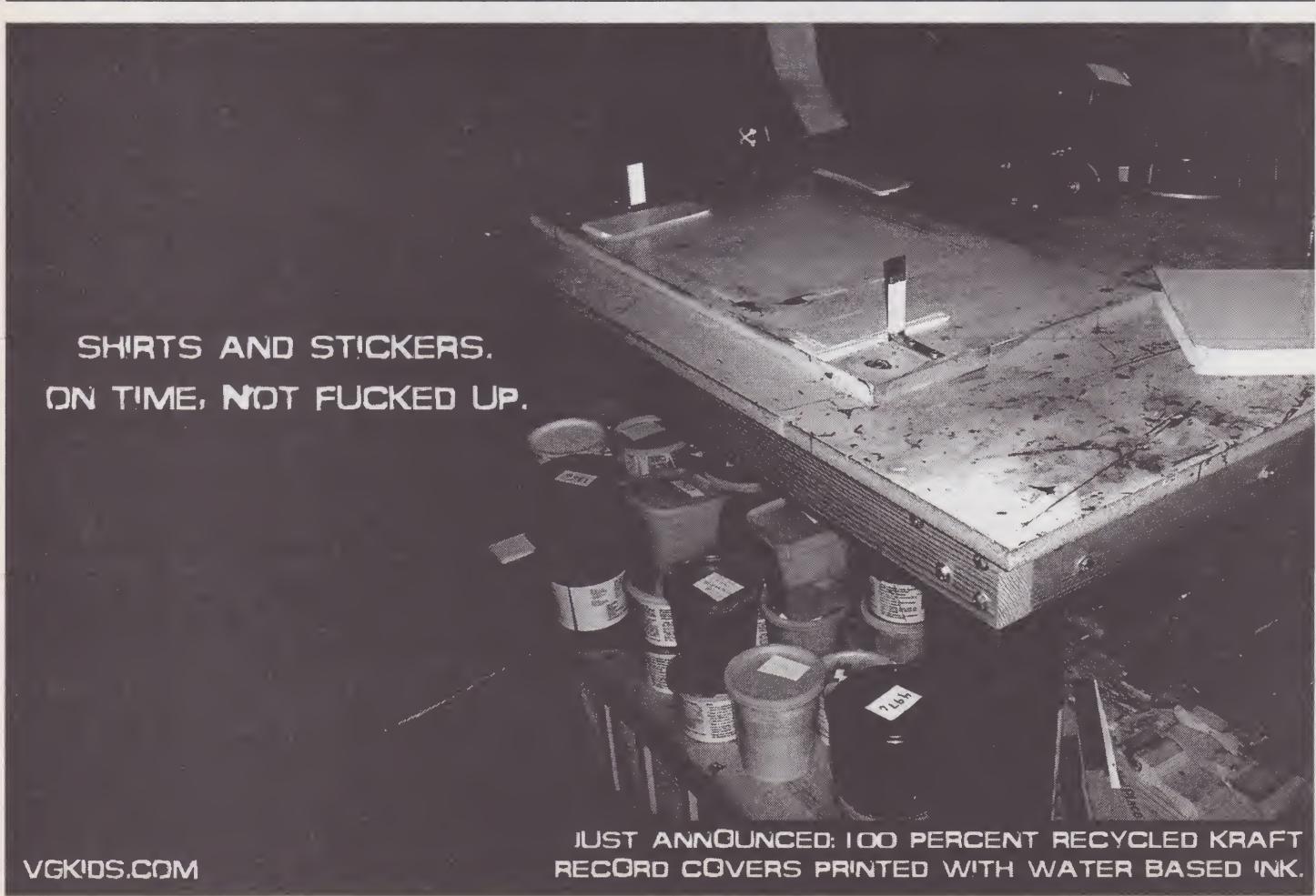
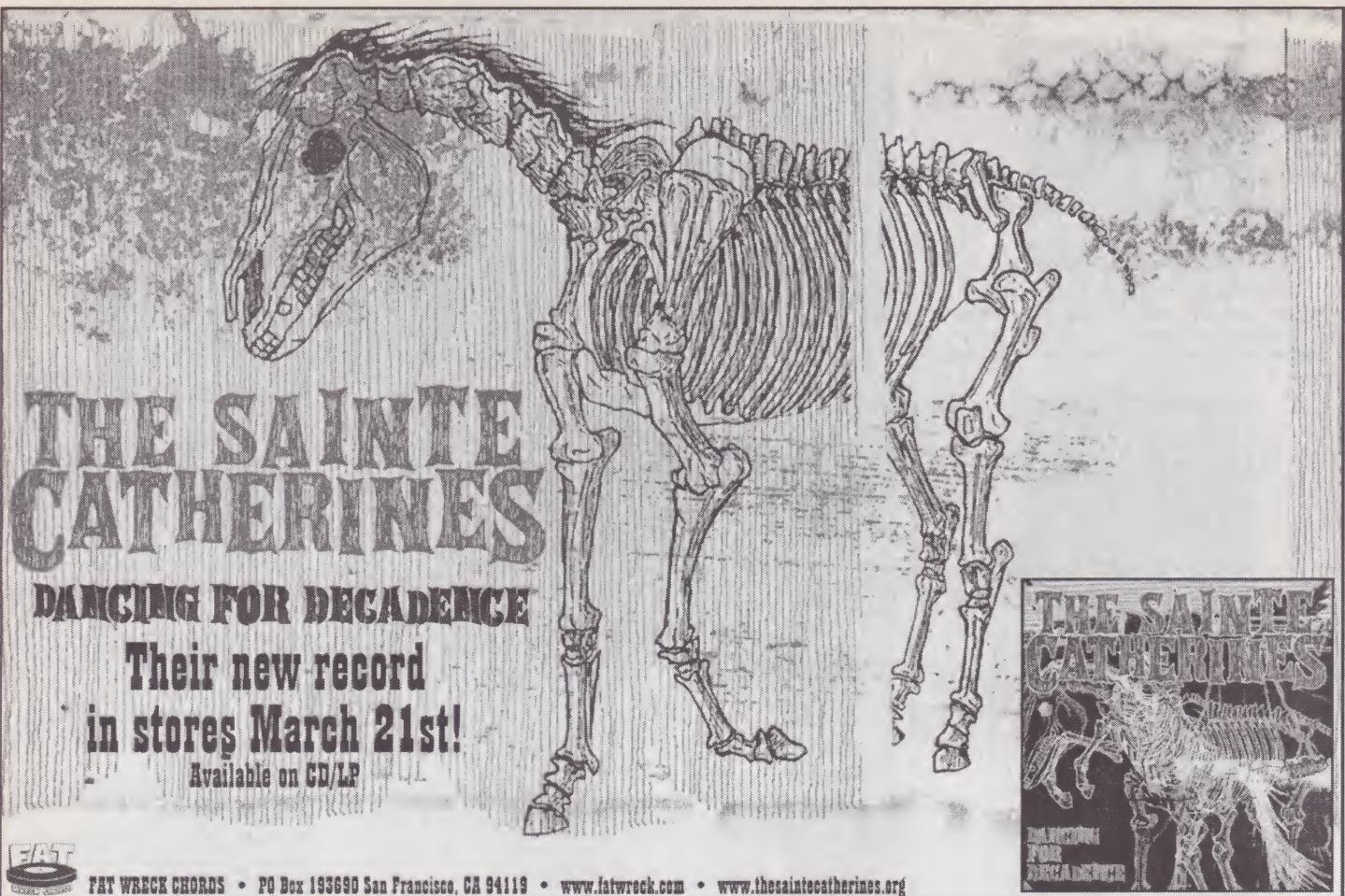
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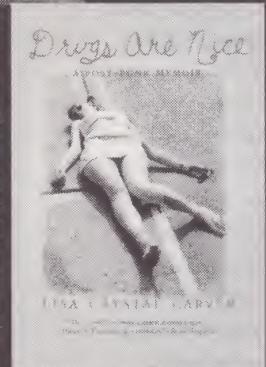
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# MUSIC



## Cannibal Corpse – Kill, CD

Every new Cannibal Corpse record is like taking a shower in my apartment: most of the time, things are fine. You're able to get a nice combination of hot water (Cannibal's technical aspect) and cold water (their base-level, death-metal standard crunchy brutality), and throughout the duration, you should be braced for temperature shifts in either direction. Sometimes, the water will get incredibly hot for no apparent reason,

and since the departure of original vocalist Chris Barnes after 1994's *The Bleeding*, Cannibal Corpse's music has been a little hot. Each subsequent record has been incredibly technical, but still somewhat rooted in a standard verse/chorus/verse format. At the same time, detractors have accused them of releasing the same record over and over again, which just isn't true. The main complaint is cold-water knob and drummer Paul Mazurkiewicz. Now, I see why people complain (his style hasn't changed much over the years), but the guy does an incredible job of keeping the shower from getting too hot; he makes it nice and comfortable. In death-metal speak, he's the rock that keeps the corpse from floating to the surface. Now, Cannibal's newest record, *Kill*, is their tenth damn album, but the first without founding guitarist Jack Owen, who now spends his time in the increasingly cold water Deicide. Returning to the fold is former Malevolent Creation and Cannibal Corpse member Rob Barrett (who played on 1996's *Vile* and abovementioned *The Bleeding*), and the change in personnel has had obvious results.

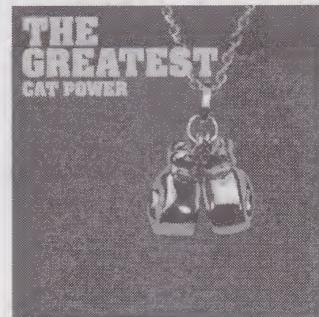
Gone are the standard verse/chorus/verse arrangements that Owen must have played a large part in creating, and at the forefront is the incredibly technical, hot-water style that bassist Alex Webster and other-guitarist Pat O'Brien are clearly really, really fond of. The first thing you'll notice, though, is that while the complexity of the songs has increased, the length of the songs themselves has drastically decreased. The only song topping four minutes is the instrumental closer, "Infinite Misery," which is still only 4:01. At the other end of the disc is opener "The Time to Kill is Now" (which sounds like it features backup vocals from producer/Hate Eternal guitarist and vocalist Erik Rutan... the promo I have is devoid of credits), which begins with a fast thrash riff and vocalist George "Corpsegrinder" Fisher screaming what sounds like "kill!" The song never lets up during its 2:03 duration, and the listener realizes instantly that they're in for one hell of a shower.

While most of *Kill* works really well ("Barbaric Bludgeonings" is one good example), sometimes a toilet gets flushed somewhere in the building and things get way too hot to handle. Such is the case 20 seconds into "Necrosadistic Warning." The tempo goes from mid-tempo to half-time over and over again in a small time frame, and the vocals try to fit in way too many words during the mid-tempo section, causing it all to sound rushed and sloppy.

Cannibal Corpse still has some of the best vocal arrangements in the game, though. Especially compared to other new death-metal releases such as Cryptopsy's *Once Was Not*, Fisher is able to accurately place his vocals in the space provided without stepping all over the song or getting in the way of something especially punishing. Knowing when to take a backseat to the music is important for a death-metal vocalist, and Fisher knows it—see "Maniacal" for a great example.

Overall, Cannibal Corpse has produced another quality shower. It clocks in at 42 minutes, which is a little longer than I like to be in the bathroom, but feels good every once and a while. The balance of temperature on *Kill* tends toward the hotter, more technical side of things, and this record is yet another that should also be released in an instrumental version for those of us that really like to study what's happening with the instruments.—Dave Hofer

Metal Blade, 2828 Cochran St., PMB 302, Simi Valley, CA 93065-2793, [www.metalblade.com](http://www.metalblade.com)



## Cat Power – The Greatest, CD

Chan Marshall, the woman behind Cat Power, is an enigma of sorts, to say the least. Having released seven records since 1995, she has created an impressive career despite onstage breakdowns, ramblings, and general instability during her live shows. On headphones, however, it's a different story—tales of heartbreak and a sorrowful outlook are put forth with a honeyed voice and dejected croon. Throughout the

Cat Power catalogue, Marshall has managed to reinvent herself enough times to remain varied and truly relevant as an artist. This time around, however, she threw a complete curveball and landed in Memphis, TN, to record with former Al Green associates Mabon "Teenie" Hodges, his brother Leroy ("Flick"), and Steve Potts of Booker T and the MG's, among others. With all of these high-profile guests, it's hard to say where exactly Marshall fits into her own project.

The title track starts lush and full with an orchestral dropping and Marshall's melancholic croon behind the arrangements. The timing is perfect: The backing arrangement immaculate in a way that pulls at the heartstrings. With a thick sound and poignant subject, this track works. This, however, is the only such track on *The Greatest*—it quickly devolves into something you might listen to while sitting on a porch swing, lifeless from heat.

There are a handful of snoozers on here, but "Lived in Bars" sounds especially tired—slow trumpets appear in the background and soft drum taps keep time as Marshall does a lounge act supreme. Later on, "After it All" pops up to offer more of the same, with a spry little whistle behind a hokey old piano line. It's an idea of the South, all canned up, which is why it continually falls flat.

Between the shoo-bop choruses, honky-tonk piano, and soft vocals coupled with jaunty horn lines, *The Greatest* is full of sleepy half-love songs. "I just want my sailor / to sail back to me" Marshall drones on "Islands," behind a sheet of Jimmy Buffet guitar. "Where Is My Love" displays Marshall at a career low, sputtering comatose vocals over a simple, self-pitying scale worthy only of a child's first piano recital, while repeating the insipid title over and over. This is a far cry from the lyrical prowess displayed on previous efforts, from "Maybe Not" to "Colors and the Kids"—but then, more people can probably relate to a wandering lover than such stark depictions of outright depression.

Many are bound to adore this record, and it will surely make more than a few laps around the AA radio charts. It is simple, subdued, and sweet; such a far cry from traumatized that it

**A**bout our reviews: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive (CD's, CD-R's, and vinyl only—as long as they're not released on a major label or one of its subsidiaries), but we reserve the right to not review something if we feel it isn't appropriate for *Punk Planet*. Also, due to the insane volume of mail we receive, some releases fall through the cracks. We're bi-monthly, so it can take up to five months for something to appear in the magazine, so send stuff early, and send it with as much contact information as possible. CD-R's that aren't promotional copies from labels or from CD-R only labels end up in the demo section, and reissues have their own section as well. Records marked with a picture of the album cover have been deemed noteworthy by that specific reviewer, for better or worse, and reviews under 100 words exclusively appear online at [www.punkplanet.com](http://www.punkplanet.com). Please keep in mind that when sending your review, it might get trashed. The review is only that reviewer's opinion and doesn't necessarily reflect the opinion of the entire magazine. Personally, I love Decapitated, but I think I'm in the minority over here. See what I'm saying? Any questions, concerns, or accolades can be directed to Dave Hofer at [reviews@punkplanet.com](mailto:reviews@punkplanet.com). Please DO NOT call the office, as Dave is not there full-time. Thank you. Send your stuff to: Punk Planet, 4229 North Honore, Chicago, IL 60613.

**This issue's review team:** Eric Action (EA), Amy Adoyzie (AA), Dan Agacki (DA), Abbie Amadio (AJA), Bill Angelbeck (BA), Anthony Bartkewicz (AB), Mike Barron (MB), Chris Burkhalter (CB), James Cardis (JJC), Mairead Case (MC), Vincent Chung (VC), Art Ettinger (AE), Mor Fleisher (MF), Eric Grubbs (EG), Ari Joffe (AJ), Scott Jones (SJ), Steve Kane (SK), Chay Lawrence (CL), Ryan Leach (RL), Justin Marciak (JM), Steve Mizik (SRM), Sean Moeller (SM), Sarah Moody (SBM), Scott J. Morrow (SJM), (Mr.) Dana Morse (DM), Brian Moss (BM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Missy Paul (MP), Rex Reason (RR), Matthew Siblo (MS), Tony Stasiek (TS), Justin Vellucci (JV), Mike Vinikour (MXV). Edited by Dave Hofer (DH)

might be called her most self-assured release yet. It may be hopeful at best, but it is anything but confident. Instead, Marshall appears to be hiding behind the slick veneer of the production, moving slightly away from her usual melodrama. Gone are the "Names" from *You Are Free*, gone is the simplicity of Cat Power's previous anger behind Marshall and a simple guitar or piano—she has traded those things for the comfort of a high-profile backing band, and as a result, she is no longer in the spotlight. Rather, the production is the star of this show. *The Greatest* sounds best, however, when there is some semblance of emotion to her voice.

In that sense, nothing comes with a punch until close to the end of the album, with the sparse declaration, "Hate." Contrasting sharply with the mood of the rest of the work, this song is self-deprecating in the best of ways—blunt, sparse, and harsh as Marshall takes over the Cobain mantra as her own. Finally, "Love and Communication" sounds like what the rest of the album should have lived up to, with the production and approach coming together in a manner more akin to previous efforts—making it sound like a true, fully collaborative effort.

*The Greatest* presents itself as little more than a swagger and a hip-shake that seems somewhat convinced of itself. It is accomplished, no doubt—Marshall never falters or second-guesses herself here—but after close to a decade of doing just that, it's a difficult album to swallow. Granted, it can only earn her more fans and achieve more widespread acclaim than previous works; but in the end, it comes off as safe, as opposed to a viable or lasting career move, and accessible in the worst of ways. If you really want to hear Cat Power at her greatest, check the back catalogue instead. —Sarah Moody

Matador Records, 625 Broadway, New York, NY, 10012, [www.matadorrecords.com](http://www.matadorrecords.com)



#### Gossip, the – Standing in the Way of Control, CD

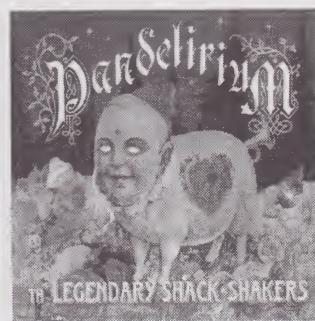
**O**n *Standing in the Way of Control*, the Gossip aims at creating a more mature sound than on previous albums, concentrating on songwriting, diversifying rhythms from track to track, and expanding their range musically and vocally. The majority of the songs, with the exception of "Eyes Open," would sound misplaced on previous records. From start to finish, the songs are

tighter and more controlled on *Standing in the Way of Control*, and the soulful wreckage of 2003's *Movement* has been gathered together and reconstructed. Replacing drummer Kathy Mendonca is Hannah Blilie. In tow with the direction of the entire album, Blilie's rhythms are mechanical and tightly played. Skeletal beats that sound fed through an electronic processor rely very heavily on repetition. Mendonca's drumming felt personal and organic, whereas Blilie's rhythms sound dance-heavy and organized, adding to the band that previously sounded unrefined. Brace Paine's guitar is more familiar, even though, in line with Blilie, he too creates rhythms that sound automatic rather than spontaneous.

On "Eyes Open," Paine's reverberating single note that opens the song is a signature opening that sets the pace for the swagger to follow. However, the song ends abruptly, seem-

ing unconfidently placed where it doesn't quite fit. Too, Beth Ditto takes command of her vocals, expanding her range and toning down her delivery. Her voice is softened on the ballad "Coal to Diamonds"; understated and feminine, she seems confident and free from the weight of having to tear through every song. Similarly, the last track, "Dark Lines," is subtly delivered. For the most part, Ditto's soft voice is accompanied solely by guitar, excepting when piano saunters in and out of the track.

With few exceptions, *Standing in the Way of Control* is a record filled with the energy of previous Gossip albums. Though the songs have been cleaned up and are not so overtly dripping with punk sweat and bluesy tears, that doesn't mean they're any less fun to listen to. In fact, a wider range of emotion and songwriting is expressed here, from the rousing first three tracks, to the funk-laced "Listen Up!" and "Keeping You Alive," to the soulful ballads that seem out of character for the band. The only disappointment is the mechanization of rhythms, which makes certain songs sound cold and detached from Ditto's guttural vocals. While disappointing on one hand, the automation can be thought of as beneficial on the other: a pounding beat, warmed by Ditto's expressive vocals, is ideal for dancing, whether it sounds emotionally detached or not. A risky album, *Standing in the Way of Control* shows the band's maturity, yet still holds on to the elements that have made the Gossip such an energizing band. The album will translate well live and move people to dance, which, however frivolous, stands for a lot. (AJA)  
Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave, PMB 418, Olympia, WA 98501, [www.killrockstars.com](http://www.killrockstars.com)



#### Legendary Shack Shakers, Th' – Pandelirium, CD

**A**s cool as their new sound is, and as much as I respect them for being true to their own artistic spirit, I'd be lying if I said I didn't seriously miss the Shack Shakers of old. I caught the original lineup of Col JD, guitarist Joe Buck, bassist Mark Robertson, and drummer Pauly Simmonz about half a dozen times on their tour in support of that first album, and those shows remain etched in my

mind as some of the most vicious, dangerous, exhilarating concert experiences I've ever had. The material they were performing at the time reached way back into the building blocks of rock 'n' roll—delta blues, electric blues, country, spirituals, and bluegrass—and coupled these sounds with raw power of Iggy & the Stooges. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say that at the time they were, both live and in the studio, the purest rock 'n' roll band on the planet. They'd hit the stage and launch into "Hoptown Jailbreak," and for the next 60 to 75 minutes, they were the baddest dudes on the planet. Then, next thing you know, Joe Buck—who personified the darkest aspects of the band's sound and vibe—abruptly quit in the middle of recording sessions for their next album. When you compare the resulting Shack Shakers release, *Believe*, with Buck's solo EP from that year, *Joe Buck Yourself Motherfucker*, Buck's departure begins to make sense. Cleary Wilkes had grown tired of playing rock 'n' roll and, therefore, needed a guitar player who shared his growing interest in klezmer, middle-eastern folk music,

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



### Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

The Pagans, *Shit Street*. Crypt records rarely disappoints in giving you the best primal rock 'n' roll from any decade. In the '70s, the Pagans were among the Midwest's finest punk outfits. Cleveland in particular was a hot spot of punk rock with the Electric Eels, Rocket From the Tombs, Dead Boys, and Pere Ubu. The Pagans are often overlooked, probably because they never had that full length that defined most bands' existence. What they left behind, though, was a slew of great singles and later, some throw-together compilations. Crypt has released several of the Pagans' compact discs, and the current one to get is the 33-track *Shit Street*. It's a much better album and worth the upgrade over the sonically inferior *Everybody Hate You*. Enclosed you get the debut scorch "Six and Change" and one of the top singles of all time, "What's This Shit Called Love," backed with "Street Where Nobody Lives." Rounding out this disc are a few unreleased songs and a slew of live tracks. For the money, you are getting a half dozen or more complete classic, raw, punk-rock tracks that are most likely often covered by your local garage outfit. Cleveland was a dirty, tough, troubled town in the late '70s, and the Pagans exemplified that with their sound. Drugs, booze, girls, theft, and everything that's so much of early punk rock bleeds through the speakers. Pick up *Shit Street* and the *Pink Album* from crypt and read the 14,000-plus word biography written by Mike Hudson, the singer himself, at [www.geocities.com/pagan\\_pages](http://www.geocities.com/pagan_pages).

**Five records to start the new year:** *This Time Just the Girls Vol. 2*, Children of Nuggets boxset, DMZ, *Live at the Rat; Born Against* (all of it), Flakes, *Back to School*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie (AA)

Oblivians, *Soul Food*. Greg Cartwright will show you how to properly love and respect music. If you are old and jaded, he will restore your faith. If you are wide-eyed and young, he will guide the way. Greg Cartwright has that ability because his music is like a prism, flashing an entire spectrum of songwriting within one man. His discography sounds like the evolution of the Neanderthal to modern dudes, from furious primal growlings to soft, subtle declarations. *Soul Food* is of the former, spewing antagonistic dirty southern soul punk. "Vietnam War Blues" opens with jangly keys and buzzing guitars, smothered by the throaty wailings of Mr. Cartwright, followed by the screeching proclamation "And Then I Fucked Her." That's just the first two tracks of 16 self-righteous, throbbing, rabid-manic, desperate hollerin' that permeates this gritty blues-influenced garage trash. Get furious ("Mad Lover"), defiant ("Never Change"), frustrated ("Bum a Ride"), urgent ("Nigger Rich"), and even the pathetic "No Reason to Live" is dripping with indignant attitude. Listening to the Oblivians against Cartwright's current band, Reigning Sound, makes you appreciate and adore his songwriting craftsmanship that seems to have a life force of its own—moving and maturing. Start here, on this rough and undeveloped landscape, dig deep and get dirt underneath your fingernails. Find the bones, so raw and real, and put them against your ear. As you faithfully listen to Cartwright, the layers of flesh will start to form and before you know it he's grown onto you.

**Top Reigning Sound ballads of the moment:** "If You Can't Give Me Everything," "Funny Thing," "I'll Cry," "If Christmas Can't Bring You Home," "I'm So Thankful."



### Reviewer Spotlight: Dan Agacki (DA)

Empire, *Expensive Sound*. Without Empire, there would have been no "Revolution Summer". Bands like Rites of Spring, One Last Wish, and Embrace probably never would have existed if they hadn't heard *Expensive Sound*. The Embrace album practically borrows exact riffs. But can I really blame Michael Hampton for copying Derwood Andrews' style? No, because Andrews' style is awe-inspiring. In a better world, the name Derwood Andrews would set off alarms in your head, but unfortunately, he's been overshadowed by less-talented, former band mates. Before Empire, Derwood Andrews was one of the brainiacs behind Generation X. After Andrews and drummer Mark Laff were both fired from Generation X, they formed Empire. In 1981 they cranked out the album *Expensive Sound*. With this original lineup they only played four shows. On the album you could hear riffs reminiscent of what Andrews had done in Generation X. He took those riffs and expanded on them. As a whole, *Expensive Sound* alternates between poppy and moody dark numbers. What has always puzzled me about the Empire story is, where did this all come from? I can't think of any bands before Empire that would have had a primary influence on their sound. Pre-1981 there's nothing that sounds like Empire. Post-1985 though, that's another story altogether. Don't get me wrong, I'm a huge geek about the "Revolution Summer" bands. Embrace? Rites of Spring? It doesn't get much better in my book... well, unless it's Empire.

**Listen to this:** Electric Masada, *At the Mountains of Madness*; Saccharine Trust, *We Became Snakes*; Clockcleaner, *Nevermind*; Calvary, *Outnumbered*; Slint, *Spiderland*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Nymb, *Glass Eye* EP. Growing up, I didn't have much of a desire to rebel in the traditional teenage manner. Instead, I was looking for common ground based on more than family-hating, hair-dyeing, and studded clothing. Whatever penchant there was toward outward rebellion, I kept well up in inside, wondering why I had the tastes I did, who else did, and what the point was anyhow? I didn't feel connected to anyone, superficiality existed in every social group, and it seemed like the majority were just that, the majority, whether or not they looked the part. One of the first shows I attended in my hometown, where I felt I could accept the goings-on around me, featured Nymb. Singer Elaine Doty's vocals were

### 26 – The Messiah, CD

For those unfamiliar with the vocal stylings of former Crucifucks mouthpiece Doc Corbin Dart, you'll love the first few moments of the man's new project, 26, but once those strange, whining vocals cut in, you might feel inclined to turn it off. Don't. The shimmering psych brilliance of opening track "Nothing in the Air" gives way to more fan-friendly rock tunes reminiscent of mid to late era Crucifucks work, but with a southern-fried psych bent. Interesting stuff. Roky Erickson, the troubled ex-frontman for Austin legends the Thirteenth Floor Elevators, is an obvious influence or musical connection, and it is through that frame of reference that I choose to hear this work. There are some missteps here—some songs that just don't quite hit the spot, but overall this is a testament to music as lifesaver. Dart's been through a lot, but who hasn't? Writing songs, questioning the world... that's how this man survives. Suspend judgment for as long as it takes to play through *The Messiah*, and you'll have yourself—at the very least—an interesting listening experience. (JJC)

Crustacean Records, PO Box 829, Madison, WI 53701-0829, [www.crustaceanrecords.com](http://www.crustaceanrecords.com)

### 86 Mentality – Goin' Nowhere Fast, CD

Did you ever listen to the Flex Your Head comp and wish the Iron Cross songs were faster and played more competently? Well, you don't have to wish anymore, because 86 Mentality sounds like the version of Iron Cross you always hoped for. My mind has been blown. 86 Mentality are one of my favorite bands to come out in the past couple of years. I heard their debut 7" awhile ago, and it was a turntable mainstay. Everything on this collection is up to par, if not better than that 7". This CD collects the debut 7", *The On the Loose* 7", two unreleased songs, one demo track, two live songs, and 4-Skins and SOA covers. The liner notes hint at this possibly being their discography. I hope that isn't true, because bands this good don't come along every day. As with every release on Grave Mistake, this is absolutely essential. (DA)

Grave Mistake Records, PO Box 12482, Richmond, VA 23241 [www.gravemistakerecords.com](http://www.gravemistakerecords.com)

### 12,000 Armies – The Mirth These Days, CD

I'll get to the moral before the story: 12,000 Armies write exceedingly good pop songs. Songs that could make Woody Allen cry. I'm honestly in awe of this. Where did they come from, and why haven't I heard this before? Music like this should be getting worldwide attention! I guess I'll just have to preach the blues for now. Brothers and sisters! Come ova he'a 'n listen! No, seriously; think what would happen if Anton from the Brian Jonestown Massacre actually got his act together. Now think of T. Rex's vocal cords. Think of Gene Clark, too! Gene Clark before the alcohol abuse, that is. Put them all together and you get a sense of this album's significance. 12,000 Armies single-handedly (well, maybe with the help of Greg Cartwright) paid off the United States' "contemporary music needs to get a whole lot better" debt. What more is there to say? This album rules times twenty-million-and-one. (MF)

Morisen Records, 2125 Southend Drive Suite 451, Charlotte, NC 28203, [www.12000armies.com](http://www.12000armies.com)

### AIDS Wolf – The Lovvers LP, CD

Adorning *The Lovvers* is a handful of pictures of forgotten nudist camps. And who should appear au natural in the CD booklet but the musicians themselves! When listening to the atrociously named AIDS Wolf (can we call a moratorium on band names with "wolf" in them, please?), I can't help but feel that the group thinks of their music as naked and free, too. The band rocks the "no prisoners, no friends, no wave" revival sound with middle fingers up and proud. Why should they make music shackled by convention or any sort of ear-pleasing notion? It's an interesting point to make; hell, it's how a bunch of 20th century composers made good. But, AIDS Wolf is so pretentious, so overconfident in its willfully shoddy attempts at music, that *The Lovvers* is nearly unlistenable. Guitar and bass lines repeatedly drill jagged holes into listeners' skulls and leave them empty of any sort of impression or idea—just a headache. Their vocalist wails gibberish like some idiot at Burning Man trying to reclaim her soul from civilization. After a slew of quickie "song" bursts, the album finishes with a 12-minute slab of chaotic aural vomiting. And like puking, I feel much, much better once it's ended. Save your time and money for no wave bands (like Teenage Jesus & the Jerks, DNA) and noise acts (Harry Pussy, Whitehouse) with something to say and the means to say it. (SRM)

Love Pump United, PO Box 3241, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603. [www.lovepumpunited.com](http://www.lovepumpunited.com)

### A Burning Water – We Can See the Sky From Here, CD

A Burning Water pulls out all the stops: sensitive breakdowns, ghoulish screams, algebraic guitar tapping sequences, metallic chugging, and of course, highway and cloudscape liner aesthetics. Every formulaic Hot Topic faux pas is utilized in gluttony. However, it's done with scrutinized accuracy, so who knows? Maybe A Burning Water is bound for their own fifteen-minute holiday in the sun. While I can half respect the technical aptitude of the musicianship, a huge part of creation is tact and progress. Grown men should know better. Contemporary emo is like a Taco Bell menu: there are slight physical and textual variances, but in the end, it all tastes the same. (BM)

Negative Progression, PO Box 193158 San Francisco, CA 94119

### A New Spelling of My Name – The Fraud and Folly of Good Intentions, LP

Me, I like a little brains with my rock. So when I realized that it would take me longer to read the "endnotes" that accompany *The Fraud and Folly of Good Intentions* than to listen to the actual album, I saw no problem. Then came album-opener "Fraud and Folly," which set the tone with a lofty National Public Radio discussion placed over melodramatic piano tinkling. Soon after, "Postmarked Qalqiyah" let me know that the Saddle Creek-sounding emo maze on my turntable was really about punk rock colonialism and Palestinians, yet the song was "not a substitute for resistance and thoughtful reflection or critical examination." In other words, *A New Spelling of My Name* sets the bar high. At least lyrically, the album is about one indie rocker's struggle to sympathize with the young rocker community around him while re-

maining mindful of the cultural atrocities at play in Iraq, the West Bank, and elsewhere. He has an articulate way of doing so: "Dear Rockville" manages to unite the US populace's allegedly misplaced outrage over the 2002 Washington, DC sniper attacks with tales of US-led Iraqi genocide and a quote from Timothy McVeigh. All of this translates into a meandering Conor Oberst-like rant over a strummed acoustic guitar. Unfortunately, this is all too often the case on *The Fraud and Folly*—even a track called "Thunderstorms Still Make Me Want to Fuck," inspired by a James Baldwin quote, sounds like church coffeehouse fodder. I'd wait for the remix album. (TS)

*Art for Blind*, [www.artforblind.com](http://www.artforblind.com).

#### **Attack Formations – Somebody as Anybody, CD**

In theory, a band that consists of a core group of members surrounded by an alternating cast of guest musicians and contributors is an enticing entity. The morphing blueprint of the Attack Formations collective works manically. Sonically, the band boasts bursts of genius as well as taxing, uninspired sections. The polar shifts are most likely attributable to the as-to-be-expected varying talents of the outside players. The band tangles between dissonant bulldozing and restrained post rock. In lyric and tone, the vocals are the dominant lacking point, often negating musical highpoints. Free-formed collaboration (depending on the involved parties) can potentially produce wondrous work. In the case of Attack Formations, it's all a bit too loosely composed. Lack aside, there's a slew of Austin indie well-knowns involved, and minimally, when in its prime, the project provides for some interesting moments. (BM)

*Australian Cattle God*, [www.australiancattlegod.com](http://www.australiancattlegod.com)

#### **BPA – Maybe Use My Knife, CD**

Ohio's place in punk history is generally restricted to early 1970s Cleveland. After brief paragraphs on Rocket From the Tombs, Pere Ubu, Devo, and maybe the Electric Eels, most accounts quickly move on to the more high-profile scene that followed in New York. But Cincinnati, Shake It Records will have you know, was a vibrant, insular, and altogether neglected post-punk Mecca in the early 1980s. Major players in that scene, BPA (Bi-Products of America) drew heavily from those aforementioned Cleveland heroes, as well as the Fall, Talking Heads, and Brian Eno, but developed a distinctive sound of their own. To hear the band tell it, this was mainly because they lacked the necessary skill to sound more like their favorite bands. "We were forced to be creative because we couldn't imitate," says drummer Todd Witt. Shambeling, yet tightly-wound, BPA's seemingly off-the-cuff songs center around a framework of propulsive, jagged rhythm and paranoid, frenetic, warbling rants. Between 1982 and 1986, BPA released a handful of recordings on local label Hospital Records and shared bills with bands like the Minutemen, Big Black, and the Violent Femmes, but never managed to make much of a splash outside Cincinnati—not in the US anyway. Thanks to distributors like Rough Trade, pockets of interest developed in England, France, and even Iceland. And if this CD's liner notes are to be believed, Madonna was a fan. The twenty songs gathered (a mere taste of a reportedly cast store of recordings) here are probably more BPA than I need

in one sitting, but the peaks of the collection are high indeed. (CB)  
*Shake It Records*, 4156 Hamilton Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45223, [www.shakelitrecords.com](http://www.shakelitrecords.com)

#### **B. Fleischmann – The Humbucking Coil, CD**

On his newest release, Bernhard Fleischmann has created a very pleasant record comprised of melodic electronic pop. Relaxing but upbeat, *The Humbucking Coil* is both poppy enough for rock fans to enjoy and tranquil enough for electronic fans to dig. Fleischmann mixes melodic guitar, keys, bass, and various other noises and instruments with slow electronic beats. Far more gentle and pop-based than his last release, *Welcome Tourist*, *The Humbucking Coil* takes full advantage of relaxed guitars, adding to an even more melodic feel. After witnessing the transition between these two albums, I have come to respect and even take influence from Fleischmann's songwriting and instrumental capabilities. Fleischmann is not merely some dude recording basic pop music with pre-made beats. I'm kind of iffy about the vocals on tracks two and seven, but ignoring those helps me realize that this is a solid record overall. It is truly a bittersweet album that is best enjoyed in the company of your boy or girlfriend. Trust me on this one. (MB)

*Morr Music*, PO Box 550141, 10371 Berlin, [www.mormusic.com](http://www.mormusic.com)

#### **Bad Vibes, the – All the Right Ways to Do You Wrong, CD**

Philadelphia's Bad Vibes finally return with their much-anticipated second full-length of hostile, straightforward, catchy punk. They wisely stick to their formula of brutally coarse vocals over heavily distorted power chords, never indulging in the cheesy metal riffs that often pollute this brand of punk. They sound like a harsher version of scene-mates Limecell and are yet another band unfairly pigeonholed by affiliations with the love-it-or-hate-it Confederacy of Scum. The recording perfectly captures what they sound like live, which is becoming a more and more challenging feat in today's era of overproduction. Songs like the title track and "I Smell a Rat" are catchy enough to suggest that this band has more mass appeal potential than you'd expect on the surface. (AE)

*Steel Cage Records*, PO Box 29247, Philadelphia, PA 19125, [www.stealcagerecords.com](http://www.stealcagerecords.com)

#### **Belle & Sebastian – The Life Pursuit, CD**

There's no denying that Belle & Sebastian are just a damn good band. Many careers would be waning by the seventh studio release, but Belle & Sebastian sound better than ever. On *The Life Pursuit*, they're a little less twee, a lot more pop, and, dare I say, a little glam. Fun and sexy in a way Belle & Sebastian have never been before, this transition is done effortlessly. With each step forward, frontman Stuart Murdoch's witicism and intelligence stay firmly intact. When listening, you'll never forget it's Belle & Sebastian, but you'll never remember them sounding so fresh. "White Collar Boy," "Funny Little Frog," and "Another Sunny Day" are happy little outbursts, immediately taking up residence in your brain. "The Blues are Still Blue" sounds like it swaggered its way off of Electric Warrior and will go down as one of the best songs Murdoch has ever constructed. It may be early in the

and weird carnival jingles. Enter David Lee, who joined the band too late into the recording of *Believe* to make an impact but contributes stellar writing to *Pandelirium*. Meanwhile, Buck's EP distilled that initial Shack Shakers sound down to its swampy, grungy, angry core. And so it goes—"creative differences" killed the classic line-up of the band after only one album. That's a damn shame if you ask me.

*Pandelirium* amounts to an electric Kool-Aid acid test for Shack Shakers' fans: either you're willing to stay on board and follow Col JD Wilkes and his merry pranksters on their increasingly weird and challenging musical journey, or you're going to get off the bus, clutching your cherished copy of *Cockadoodledon't*. Taken on its own merit, *Pandelirium* is an excellent album that finds Th' Legendary Shack Shakers firmly embracing the "gypsy-punk" style they'd hinted at on 2004's *Believe*. Songs like "Gypsy Valentine," "No Such Thing," and "South Electric Eyes" feature textured arrangements, littered with clarinets, strings, and beautiful Southeastern European melodies. These songs are catchy with tons of punch, proving the band to be talented, capable musicians who, in a short period of time, have seemingly mastered a style of music that was culturally foreign to them. The downside is that the fellas have all but abandoned the raw rock 'n' roll sound of their marvelous 2003 debut, *Cockadoodledon't*. The only real rock 'n' roll song on the new album is the minute-and-a-half instrumental "Thin the Herd."

Regardless of my yearnings for the return of the old-school Shack Shakers, *Pandelirium* is too solid of an album to ignore. I have a feeling Th' Legendary Shack Shakers (which basically means Col JD and whoever he's playing with at the time) will continue to grow, expand their sound, and build an enjoyable, eclectic catalog. Wilkes and company have made a connection between the blues and country (American folk music) they grew up with and the Mediterranean folk music they've adopted. So, I'm gonna' stay on the bus and see where the road takes us. But my guts, the place where rock 'n' roll comes from, tells me that, sooner than later, they need to get back to doing what they do best: reelin', rockin', and rollin' 'til the break of dawn. — Ari Joffe

*Yep Roc Records*, P.O. Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, [www.yeproc.com](http://www.yeproc.com)



#### **Deadboy & the Elephantmen – We Are Night Sky, CD**

Depending upon personal perspective and preference, *We Are Night Sky* is like a mantra or plain old monotony. The southern duo's debut either engrosses and hypnotizes, or it bores. Dax Riggs plays guitar and allows no rest for his vocal cords. Tessie Brunet plays the drums with slightly more dexterity than Meg White and occasionally adds background vocals. The duo, however, dodges direct comparisons to the White Stripes by bringing guests to assist on half of the 12 tracks. Still, Deadboy plays

roots and garage-rock songs with minimal instrumental flair. The basic arrangements allow Riggs to show off his voice, and his vocals immediately assert their power and claim their uniqueness. In the first track, "Stop, I'm Already Dead," Riggs sings kaleidoscopic variations of the title: "Stop, na-na-na-oohoo, I'm all-ready dead, / Yeahh, yeahhhh, yea-ahhhhh." He emulates gospel and R&B singers by trilling and wringing every drop of emotion out of each syllable. He bends the melodies and adds meaningless yet passionate accents: ooohs, uh-huhs, yeahs, and the like. Riggs's voice is a versatile baritone, but like many other rock singers' voices, the emotion that fuels his vocals is what makes his voice extraordinary. All the vocal details become foils to the relatively bare electric garage-rock power chords or the simple acoustic strumming and controlled percussion. As the de facto lead instrument, Riggs's voice substitutes for guitar solos and instrumental codas in the usual points of the songs' structures. In "How Long the Night Was," he riffs off the main line of the song: "If you were dreaming / you know how long the night was." Together, he and Brunet deliver memorable couplets and neat lyrical resolutions to several other songs. "I envy the night / for its absence of light," they sing over and over in "Ancient Man." At the end of "Evil Friend," the duo repeats and varies the lyrics: "We are night sky / we are god's eye / at the end of a lullaby / on the shore of tears yet to be cried." Some might condemn the frequent repetition on the record as lazy writing. In the context of the album, however, it conveys a stylistic and aesthetic continuity. Riggs and Brunet allude to the fall of Genesis; they also sing of death, skulls, bones, darkness, and night, obviously. Like the repetition, dark lyrical subject matter maintains a consistent presence throughout the record. Riggs's vocals and the repetition with Brunet add a foreboding element that complements the dark lyrics. *We Are Night Sky* might lull you to a nightmarish sleep. (JM)

*Fat Possum Records*, PO Box 1923, Oxford, MS 38655, [www.fatpossum.com](http://www.fatpossum.com)

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

unlike anything I had heard at that time; I was mesmerized by her. Her voice filled the hall, and though I didn't appreciate the weight of Nymb's sound then, the band's ethereal rock soared in line with her vocals. The sound felt enormous, in its own world and detached from everything around it. The Glass Eye EP features three songs, "Rope+Ring," "Aluminum Origami," and "Brews." The album's brevity is an attribute rather than a fault, as it contributes to the mysteriousness of the band and the ephemeral qualities in their music. Nymb was short-lived, releasing only two EPs and one full-length, although their impression was greater. For those of us close—but not close enough—to big cities and feeling weighted down and uninspired by the scene around us, they were a memorable band.

Cat Power, *The Greatest*; Devendra Banhart, *Cripple Crow, the Gossip, Standing in the Way of Control*; Karen Houpert, *The Curse; 101 Essential Tips: Cat Care*.



### Review Spotlight: Bill Angelbeck (BA)

**Richard Buckner, *The Hill*.** Richard Buckner has been a unique songwriter, mostly of the alt-country vein, but willing to be backed by distorted guitar as well as steel guitar. For this album, he chose to put Edgar Lee Master's Spoon River Anthology to music, a series of poems written in 1913 about a small-town cemetery in Illinois. Like tombstone inscriptions, each piece represents the messages and stories of the dead buried within, providing an intimate picture of turn-of-the-century life and death. Each poem is titled after a deceased person, and Buckner is able to make the several free-verse poems he selected flow in song form—in that way, it matches Buckner's own songwriting style. Here, he's backed by Joey Burns and John Convertino of Calexico on bass, cello, and drums. Since Buckner didn't write the lyrics, he seemed to focus on the music, which is at his most powerful. Nearly half of the pieces are short instrumentals, and these flow effortlessly from one into another with rarely a silence in between. Buckner, unfortunately, chose to list these all as one track, which is understandable given the album's flow—but it makes it difficult to jump straight to "Elizabeth Childers," a heart-gripping tale of a mother who dies with her infant in childbirth, conveyed simply with affecting mandolin and acoustic guitar. Buckner turns to music what on the page doesn't seem at all like a song. It's a masterwork from an accomplished songwriter.

**What's he listening to in there?:** Akron/Family, S/T; Prefuse 73, *Reads the Books*; Clap Your Hands Say Yeah, S/T; Lau Nau, *Kuutahra*; Alva Noto & Ryuichi Sakamoto, *Inse*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Anthony Bartkewicz (AB)

**Bathory, S/T.** Black metal is big business these days—at least, it's getting plenty of ink spilled over it. Whether its practitioners are burning down churches and killing each other, "selling out" by stepping outside the maze of what is and isn't "true," or returning to its misanthropic, isolationist one-man roots in the form of US entities like Leviathan and Xasthur that score press from avant-garde-minded publications, all roads lead back to a Swedish teenager who named himself Quorthon and set to work on going "beyond Slayer." But while the third Bathory LP, *Under the Sign of the Black Mark*, is the one that set modern black metal's aesthetics in stone, and later albums inspired Scandinavian bands to go Viking, the self-titled debut is practically a garage-punk record. There's plenty of metal atmosphere inspired by Slayer and Judas Priest, but with the trebly downstroked guitars and simplistic riffs, most of this could comfortably hang out with your Dwarves and Rip-Off Records discs. Best song: "In Conspiracy With Satan." But the overall importance of this record to black metal—like, the genre wouldn't exist without it—and metal in general can't be exaggerated. And the cover remains the simplest, best, and most identifiable totem of black metal aesthetics.

**The dark lord approves:** Mogwai, *Mr. Beast*; Leviathan, *The Tenth Sublevel of Suicide*; POS, *Audition* (reviewed this issue); Electric Wizard, *Dopethrone*; Burst, *Origo*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Mike Barron (MB)

**Pan\*American, 360 Business/360 Bypass.** I discovered Pan\*American by accident on a website that doesn't really exist anymore while searching for some electronic band that doesn't matter. Instantly, I fell in love with the subtle, restrained melodies of Mark Nelson, AKA Pan\*American. Mark had been in Labradford, another Kranks group who got their kicks by making very quiet, slow, laid-back tunes that some might refer to as "boring." The first track is instant bliss for me; "Steel Stars" puts me in another world, as corny as that may sound. The play count on my iTunes is by far higher than any of my other songs, and I'm sure the first track of the LP is quite worn down. Nelson's down-tempo dub/techno approach is a refreshing alternative to more conventional techno and electronic beats. Throughout the record, his Rhodes produces beautiful tones, and the clanking of metal objects provide a unique backbone and structure to the six songs on this album, while Rob Mazurek's coronet wails over two tracks, and Mimi Parker and Alan Sparhawk croon on "Code." 360 Business/360 Bypass is quite the departure from Nelson's other albums, but it is a welcome change. I don't exaggerate when I say that it is quite possibly the most gorgeous record that I have ever heard. While Pan\*American's records after this release have sounded strikingly different, he still remains one of my favorite artists, and this album remains of my favorite three records of all time. (MB)

**Ear candy:** Metal Hearts, *Socialize* (reviewed this issue); Miwon, *Pale Glitter*; Crombie, *Forest Walk* (reviewed this issue); Angels of Light, *Sing "Other People"*; Andrew Bird, *Andrew Bird & the Mysterious Production of Eggs*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Chris Burkhalter (CB)

**The Fall, *Grotesque (After the Gramme)*.** It could be argued that the Fall make for better literature than music—and that argument could be made without doing disservice to the formidable musicians who've backed

year, but Belle & Sebastian have set the bar high for any band releasing a pop album anytime soon. Well done, indeed. (MP)  
Matador, 625 Broadway, New York City, NY 10012, [www.mata-dorecords.com](http://www.mata-dorecords.com)

### Betrayed – Addiction, CD

**Betrayed** is the latest creation from the people who brought us some of the better hardcore bands in recent years: Champion, Carry On, and Terror. Musically, they play a solid mix of straightedge hardcore of varying tempos with a strong nod to Dag Nasty. Here and there, the ghosts of their previous bands creep into the songs, but it's really only a positive thing. The lyrics are pretty standard fare and primarily deal with overcoming addiction, straightedge, and making the most of your time. What really sticks out is vocalist Aram Arslanian's ability to convey these themes through personal experience rather than relying on the typical sloganizing this genre is so known for. (SK)

Bridge Nine, PO Box 990052 Boston, MA 02199-0052, [www.bridge9.com](http://www.bridge9.com)

### Black Tie Bombers – Art is Easy, CD

What these guys lack in originality they make up for by being damn catchy. As I get older, I have to remember that while the names may change, the sound kind of stays the same. The Buzzcocks made way for Green Day, who then make way for the Ergs, or Bad Religion made way for Pennywise, and so on. So where's my replacement? But seriously, these guys are one part '80/90s Lookout!, two parts LA/Fat Wreck and one more part DIY sound and style. There's a certain sound that a band can't capture when striving to sound like a more well-known band. Sure, I can say this record captures the sound of an upbeat punk band, has a catchy sound that borders pop and skate rock, and that Black Tie Bombers definitely have a sense of humor but do not come off as a joke band. That would all be accurate, but what I want to focus on is that it's obvious these kids have heart: not only do they sound good, but they sound like they mean it. The music just captures that "we've practiced hard and we have a good product, so here we are world!" thing that sometimes can never be recaptured in future records or when a band has to put out records due to contracts. The message revolves around living for today, not being tied down with the day-to-day, loose political beliefs, and pointing out the shortcomings of the government. Yeah, we've heard it all before, but when it comes out as wholehearted and as honest as these guys do it, you can't help but to start circle dancing in your bedroom. Bravo to the Black Tie Bombers! (DM)

Black Tie Bombers, [www.blacktiebombers.com](http://www.blacktiebombers.com)

### Bleeding Through – The Truth, CD

In a recent interview, Bleeding Through claimed that they were the first band to mix hardcore and metal. Fuck off. This band is just plain silly. The album starts out with some nice high-speed riffs and a dash of blast beats, but only takes 43 seconds to get to the off-key crooning of vocalist Brandan (No last name given in the liner notes . . . and yes, his name is spelled with two A's). The artwork is pretty cool, but other than that, Bleeding Through hasn't changed an iota since their last record. That's bad. At this point

in the review, it must be pointed out that "Line in the Sand" is a FUCKING POWER BALLAD. I guess that means they've embraced themselves as the modern cock-rock cliche that they are. Now, 14-year-old fashion punks can take those stupid scarves out of their back pockets and wipe the mascara off of their girlfriend's eyes at the shows before their mom picks them up and asks them, "What's wrong? It looks like you've been crying!" Yes ma'am, yes I have. (DH)  
Trustkill, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, [www.trustkill.com](http://www.trustkill.com)

### Blessing the Hogs – The Twelve Gauge Solution, CD

I'll admit, a good portion of this review was contemplated whilst playing the Pac-Man knock-off video game enclosed on this disc (score: 33,280 . . . and I was able to secure (instead of fruit) Jack Daniels, a bong, some Jagermeister, and a girl on a pentagram. One of the members got me before I could secure the lines of blow and razor blade, though). The music isn't all that bad either. Recorded by Billy Anderson, who's also featured on guitar and vocals, this is a great return to form after some weak recordings (like that last Skarp record). Heavy, dirty metal with an obvious Melvins influence. I'm into it, but I bet it would sound better if I were all fucked up. (DH)  
Goodfellow, 213 Wilson St, Hamilton, Ontario, L8R 1C5, [www.goodfellowrecords.com](http://www.goodfellowrecords.com)

### Boduf Songs – S/T, CD

English singer-songwriter Mat Sweet uses an enigmatic pseudonym to craft enigmatic acoustic gems on this nine-song outing, featuring deceptively spare arrangements that fall somewhere between Dean Roberts and The Doctor Came at Dawn. Sweet spends much of the record singing in a breathy whisper about pitch-black rainbows, sunsets, and the feeling of skin on skin, but it would be a mistake to write this off simply as an exercise in melancholy singer-songwriter balladry. Some of the finest moments are the details Sweet stitches below the surface: the violin bows and industrial exhalations of "Grains" and "Claimant Reclaimed," the twinkling cymbals and computer-whirled flourishes of "Our Canon of Transposition," the washes of sound that saturate the album-closing "Vapour Steals the Glow." But, what really sticks with you is the unbearable tenderness of his fragile acoustic guitar melodies, and the way his whisper suggests that truths run deeper than lyrics suggest. What better way to describe a record that can feel devastating with words as seemingly simple as, "Rain came down to drive us in / as bones unfold / rejoice with trembling?" (JV)

Kranky, PO Box 259310, Chicago, IL 60625, [www.kranky.net](http://www.kranky.net)

### Book of Lists, the – Red Arrows, CDEP

If the public library possessed a reference book called *The Book of Lists*, chances are Red Arrows by guitar-pop quartet the Book of Lists would appear in the "Good Records" list. Like an arrow from a taut quiver, the six songs on this EP spring from the speakers. Opener "Through Stained Glass" erects a wall of jangly guitar chords. Halfway through the song, Chris Frey and Trevor Larson's guitars swoop and shriek like birds of prey. The result is a shot of lo-fi shoegaze. Laura Piasta's bass and Brady Cranfield's drums inject "Pacifist Revolt" with a stomping Brit-pop backbone

that anchors the loose guitar work during the verses. Everything gels in "Becoming Forgettable." One guitarist stabs at reverb-treated chords. The other guitarist strangles a clean riff and delivers loose fills. Cranfield fills the space with noise from every component of the drum kit. Piasta guides the song with references to chords and the song's key. Like My Morning Jacket and Built to Spill, the guitarists in the Book of Lists are not afraid to imagine themselves flooded by a spotlight while they explore their instruments and different techniques. Without resorting to wankery, Red Arrows is a bull's-eye of a debut. (JM)

Global Symphonic, [www.globalsymphonic.com](http://www.globalsymphonic.com)

#### **Caliban/Heaven Shall Burn – Split Program II, CD**

It's a shame that Caliban hail from the darkest depths of Germany. Had they been formed on this side of the Atlantic, they might have stood a chance of achieving the kind of fame they're probably dying for. The opening track "The Revenge" is the only new track from Caliban and has some sung vocals that must win some kind of award by not making me feel physically ill. Unfortunately, the rest of the tracks follow a similar metalcore pattern, the process of re-recording stripping some of the life from them in the process. Good, but compared to their earlier releases, the band sound like they're beginning to run out of steam. Heaven Shall Burn still sound like a poppy At the Gates, or maybe some third rate black metal band covering a second rate pop-punk band (or is that the other way around?), and left me feeling as confused as that analogy. (CL)

Lifeforce Records, [www.lifeforcerecords.com](http://www.lifeforcerecords.com)

#### **Checkers, the – Running With Scissors, CD**

Ladies and gentlemen, the bubble gum has popped, and it is filled with ten, small-in-size-yet-big-in-volume, razor blades. They are sticky and sharp and want to stab your little heart out. They have names, they have melodies, and their home, the one that burst open not so long ago, is within the Checkers' newest album. They are the Checkers' songs, "Searching for You," "Turn Me On," "The Invitation," and so forth, and they are out to infect. With tight musicianship (instrumental and otherwise), this female fronted pop 'n' roll group's second full-length is bound to put them on the map. It's just a matter of time; they're aching to come out. Their pattern has already stained Los Angeles and is dying to come to a town near you. Watch out: the Checkers make the cheesy into the lovable, the painful into the brilliant, and they are here to conquer you. (MF)

Teenacide Records, PO Box 291121, Los Angeles, CA 90029, [www.teenacidercords.com](http://www.teenacidercords.com), [www.thecheckers.net](http://www.thecheckers.net)

#### **Chomsky, Noam – Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda, CD**

There aren't many intellectuals who can crank out spoken word albums like Robert Pollard does music and actually have a following, but Chomsky has even done split albums with the likes of Chumbawamba and Bad Religion, such is his appeal. The reason, of course, is his incisive political history and commentary that can make seemingly complex and unfathomable situations come into focus. For this release, it is a lecture from many years ago, which is unfortunate:

I'd be more interested in comments about the current Bush regime, instead of Reagan and Bush Sr., which are the focus of this lecture. The whole of the talk is really about the long history of the use of propaganda to undermine democracy in America—the process of "manufacturing consent." The powerful oligarchs believe they need to create lies (propaganda) for the ultimate good of the people overall. It is about creating "necessary illusions." These are not Chomsky's terms; he just quotes the intellectual thinkers advocating exactly such measures. This lecture is undoubtedly selected for his succinctness and will serve as a worthy overview or introduction to his books on these subjects. (BA)

Seven Stories Press, 140 Watts St, New York, NY 10013, [www.sevenstories.com](http://www.sevenstories.com)

#### **Citizen – Manifesto for the New Patriot, CD**

Matt Widener really needs to be recognized as one of underground metal's true eccentric, individualist geniuses. After pioneering US Carcass-cloning with Exhumed, going atavistic-grind with Cretin, and some secret projects his name isn't publicly attached to, he adds masterminding this high-concept grindcore outfit to his resume. Citizen declare themselves "grindcore for the people," and once you get past all the militant revolutionary sloganizing and artwork, you'll encounter their big-riffing grind anthems that incorporate marching band drum and bugle calls, martial mid-tempo breakdowns, and melodies that are literally as anthemic as possible, having been culled from the world's national anthems. Unlike grind bands who go for maximum speed, Citizen never blur into over-extremity—thus, they're heavy without having to indulge in overt metal elements to do so, and the riffing can stay grounded in the earliest hardcore-spawned grindcore. Lyrics are growled, but song titles like "The People's War," "Insurrectionary Evolution" and "Coup D'Etat" get the message across. Bolt Thrower have built their career on "war is hell" (or at least "Warhammer 40K is hell"), but however literally or figuratively Citizen mean "revolution." Manifesto for the New Patriot makes a war against your oppressors sound triumphant and totally kickass. (AB)

Earache Records, 43 W. 38th St., 2nd floor, New York, NY 10018

[www.earache.com](http://www.earache.com)

#### **Crombie – Forest Walk, CD**

Crombie's nonchalant take on jazz receives two big thumbs up from this reviewer. Tortoise-influenced, but not to the point of imitation, Crombie paves new trails with their mix of soft synths, gentle drumming, warm bass, and jazzy, subtle guitar. This instrumental group's distinctive songwriting seems to bridge the gap very nicely between jazz and electronic music with a mix of live and sampled drumming. The two middle tracks, "Seagulls are Building an Army" and "Take a Walk Into the Forest" feel the most developed and are quickly followed by the extremely interesting and well-composed "54." Forest Walk is a chilled out, laid-back record, but not to the point of minimalism or monotony. The changes keep you on your toes, while the beat keeps your head moving. It has all the qualities of a successful record in this genre: warmth, fullness, growth, and successful instrumentation. I expect big things from Crombie, and



#### **Dogs of Ire—Sterile Thoughts From a First World, CD**

Dogs of Ire are a versatile band that can bust out wall-of-sound hardcore then metamorphose into math rock instrumentals, and then again into eruptions of noise. Vocals can be primal screams, or words spoken in Tagalog—a couple songs are titled in Tagalog and one of the songs, "Sa Kabilang Ng Mapa (The Other Side of the Map)," is likely about the Philippines and has some lyrics in English: "One thousand conquered years I inhale / the trees are the elevators / black orchids are free psychiatrists / the sweet air replaces television." The lyrics are intelligent and convey a message, but through an often surrealistic manner. On the well-titled "White Guys Gone Wild," they let field recordings of Vietnam vets do the words, as they berate Bush for his unwillingness to serve in Vietnam but remain trigger-happy for Iraqis. The backing music of that piece is practically post-rock in its instrumentality, but that breaks into the brash "Ordinary Colonial Confessions." It has some good lyrics, just as most of the album does throughout: "This is why words burn through pages / the Mayflower won't save you / your tanning booth can't hide you / choke on mother's meatloaf / we own you." As should be evident, much of the lyrics do have a political edge, and the message is driven well by this music. On "Defunct Pedagogues (the Template Still Stinks)," there are interweaving guitars and stream of consciousness drums—all of it has a palpable tension like an ominous countdown. The opener, "Listen," originates in a clamor of noise manipulation, scratchy guitars, and erratic drumming before settling into riffs with deep backbones. The short "Trickle-down Diasporas" is an abrasive clockwork-like piece that would have hypnotic qualities, if it weren't so brief. Other tracks showcase propulsive drumming, rugged (yet distinct) basslines, plus spirit-lifting speed. This also comes in a well-designed package; its aesthetic matches the treatment of the sound production, which has clarity and substantiveness that gives it a live quality. This album is something—it's interesting on many levels, and that's reason enough to search it out. (BA)

Ethospine Noise, PO Box 1611, Riverside, CA 92502, [www.ethospine.com](http://www.ethospine.com)



#### **The Lawrence Arms, the – Oh! Calcutta!, CD**

I've had the pleasure of reviewing the last few albums by this excellent Chicago punk band over the past few years, and their latest release is no exception. Though a number of bands or artists hit their peak with their first album (because they've had their whole life to write it), and subsequent records suffer a sharp decline in quality due to label pressure for tours and more hits, the Lawrence Arms seem to have embraced the two-year touring and album cycle and channeled whatever stress may occur directly into their music. While their first two records (*A Guided Tour of Chicago and Ghost Stories*) both featured some excellent songs, they didn't hit their stride until 2002's *Apathy and Exhaustion*. Two albums later and still going strong, I think it's safe to say that the Lawrence Arms are officially the second coming of Naked Raygun. Hooks and whoa-whoa's all over the fucking place, the band even gives a subtle nod to their Chicago brethren on "Requiem Revisited," which borrows a snippet from Raygun's classic sing-a-long "Soldiers Requiem." Aside from the excellent songwriting, Brendan Kelly and Chris McCaughan's lyrics are clearly personal and laden with emotion, similar to another great, Jawbreaker. Lots of lyrics about the city, drinking, feeling bummed—you know, lyrics that can be interpreted individually, rather than being stock bullshit about missing your love or dying without some damn girl; lyrics that sound even better when being shouted by a few hundred kids at a show, each feeling it in his or her own way. The Lawrence Arms are one of the last few punk bands around whose albums really convey their feelings, rather than being depressed (or pretending to be depressed) in return for album sales. In fact, it really doesn't seem like these guys do anything to try and boost albums sales except write fucking amazing songs. Weird concept, I know, but even their political leanings aren't so obvious as to be distracting. Mark my words, this band, long after their (hopefully distant) demise the Lawrence Arms will be remembered as one of the greatest punk bands ever. (DH)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, [www.fatwreck.com](http://www.fatwreck.com)



#### **Make Up – Untouchable Sound: Live!, CD**

I know you weren't there in Detroit, sweating it out to every note and word that came sputtering out of Rob Tyner's mouth. It was 1968, and you may have still been an itch in your daddy's crotch or a shake in your mama's ass, but you can't tell me you were there kicking out any type of jam with MCS. But once the chorus of screams and handclaps comes through the speakers as "Kick Out the Jams" blasts and you hear a cry for revolution, you are there. A masterful live recording puts you there, in the crowd, with your ears seething from everyone else screaming out the lyrics too. A masterful live recording of the Make Up puts you right at centerstage beneath frontman Ian Svenonius's manic movements, feeling the air rush pass your face as he waves his arm above you and then slowly begins crawling over the crowd digging into every person in the room. "Every Baby Cries the Same" is a charge against a society that preaches MLK's dream without coming to terms with our waking hypocrisy. A spooky and buzzing throb

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

notorious frontman Mark E. Smith over the years. When in top form, Smith's rants are just that good. 1980's *Grotesque* was the first album where Smith properly embraced the "crap rap" style of rambling-diatribes-as-lead-vocals that would turn out so much incredible material for decades to come. Backed by discrete performers who sound by turns like an atonal rockabilly band, Can, or a *White Light/White Heat*-era Velvet Underground, Smith's agitated narratives twist down paths both lucid and absurd, with a cast of characters that includes Big A&M Herb, J Temperance and his dog-boy offspring, and an amateur radio enthusiast framed for murder by the government. Smith delivers his ever-bizarre tales in an impatient pub-anecdote growl that spectacularly showcases his brilliance for hit-and-run provocations. "The English groups act like peasants with free milk." "Californians only think of sex / or think of death." "Communists are just part-time workers." But the acerbic wit and masterful storytelling doesn't reach its peak until the lengthy and entirely literary album closer, "The NWRA"—my pick for the Fall's first full-fledged masterpiece.

I wish I knew how to quit you: Burning Witch, Crippled Lucifer, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Cosmo's Factory, Gas, Zauberberg, Isolee, Wearemonster, Shangri-Las, Best of.



### Reviewer Spotlight: James Cardis (JJC)

**Gong, Magick Brother.** In light of all the noise made in recent years about psych-folk revivalists Animal Collective, Devendra Benhart, PG Six, and a whole slew of others, I thought I would do an irregular series of spotlights on some of the "nuggets" of the original psychedelic-folk era. The first and foremost group, Daevid Allen and Gilli Smith's indescribable, undefinable Gong, are to me the best example of what possibilities there are for this kind of music. On 1969's *Magick Brother*, the principles of Gong set out to create something apart from the more dense, proggy Radio Gnome Series of albums, which I won't go into here. What they managed to write was, as ProgArchives.com writer Hugues Chantaine puts it, "the epitome of hippydom," using everything from radio broadcasts to human exhalation to create their sound. If that description sets you to think there is no focus on this album, don't be fooled. *Magick Brother* has some of the greatest, most overlooked pop gems of the decade, the kind of downtrodden anthems that could only be voiced from the point of view of exiled European hippies. In fact, even the seemingly random sound collage tracks have a definite pop sensibility, all de-tuned sorrow amidst catchy hopefulness. This album has been, for as long as I've known it, an essential part of my "stoner canon," the kind of album that's a welcome listen whilst under any range of influences. Once purchased, it'll likely make its way into yours.

**James Cardis' top spins:** Radiohead, Airbag/How Am I Driving? CDEP; Bloodstone, Natural High LP (Decca); Monguito Santamaría, Hey, Sister LP (Fania); Jackie Lomax, Is This What You Want? LP (Apple); V/A, The Braintide Coincidence (Rephlex); Ray Barretto (RIP), Acid, Latino Con Soul, Barretto Power!

### Reviewer Spotlight: Mairead Case (MC)

**Jeff Buckley, Grace.** Calm yourselves, kids, because I am fully aware of this spotlight's whacked aesthetic. This is Punk Planet, yet it is also a recommendation for an album whose Leonard Cohen cover, "Hallelujah," has been optioned for all the o-god-my-brother-died moments ever witnessed this side of Peacock, Inc. Still, it is always punk to speak for what one loves, besides which Jeffrey Lee Pierce never made me cry. Buckley's arabesque falsetto does, likewise his pregnant pauses and sad-harlequin choruses, all rendered poignant by his 1997 drowning. Grace can be saccharine, and there's a distinct whiff of junior high to the whole ("Kiss me / please kiss me"), but hey, Buckley's vocal curl, like slide guitar and choir boy at once, will make you goosebump more deeply than the Jordan Catalano Lean ever could.

**Lots of sunlight & little battles:** V/A, Sleepless in Seattle: the Birth of Grunge; Saul Williams, Amethyst Rock Star; Two Gallants, What the Toll Tells; Tiny Vipers, Demo; Kevin Coyne, Sugar Candy Taxi.



### Reviewer Spotlight, Vincent Chung (VC)

**Gordon Solie Motherfuckers, Powerbomb Anthems, Vol. 1.** No offense to some readers, but I fucking hate Cleveland, Ohio. The place depresses me like the third Big Star record—just aapid, slow drain. It's like dying from gangrene on the dick. But, every shitty city has awesome hardcore bands, and Cleveland had Integrity. Now, to extend this theory further, what about all those remote areas outside of the city? The fifth song ("Parma Über Alles") begins with someone in the band declaring, "I play this song out of protest because I'm not from Parma. I'm from Painesville, motherfucker!" In response, another member just exclaims "Holy shit!" right when the cut kicks in like a rodeo bull—with the listener tied by the ankles and wondering when shitty locales orbiting Cleveland sounded so good. Five years ago, the Gordon Solie Motherfuckers (and their brother band, Nine Shocks Terror) were supreme shit in the punk scene as their reputation of volatile live shows preceded them with a myriad of Cleveland club bannings. With the band long since combusted, let's reflect on this one-two punch of an LP as a testament to their staying power. It's a flawless blend of blistering Japanese hardcore riffage layered into SS Decontrol. With plenty of memorable lyrics ("Three chords and a cloud of dust / In DIY I fucking trust!"), incredible musicianship, and their infamous in your face nihilism, this batch of a dozen songs ripped minds into shreds everywhere. In a time period where most were aping Spazz, this was a more than welcome change.

**You can . . . hate It or love It(repeat):** Sympathy for Lady Vengeance DVD; the Boys, S/T; Raekwon, Only Built 4 Cuban Linx; Doom, World of Shit; The Mary Jane Girls, Best of.

for Tortoise to take some notes from them. Congratulations on the creation of a record in this genre that I truly enjoy and will continue to listen to. (MB)  
No contact info provided

### Crosby, Ryan Lee / The Instances – Split Cassette, CD

On this split release, both artists take to the four track to record their lo-fi musings, each to a different end. Crosby comes off as a singer-songwriter traumatized by suburbia, the tortured sad bastard alternately whispering and whining tired songs about drinking and broken lovers, attempting a confessional style without the songwriting skill. The second half is taken by the Instances, AKA Raymond Morin, who prefers to layer his vocals with a sheath of guitar effects, from distortion to finger picking. A vague attempt at aping freak-folk ideals, Morin instead sounds exaggerated and overly shrill. Both thud along as though they've suffered a drought of inspiration, making this a dull and tedious listen. (SBM)

Sort of Records, [www.sortofrecords.com](http://www.sortofrecords.com)

### [DARYL]/Black Tie Dynasty – Bloody Basin, CDEP

Combining the forces of one of Dallas' oldest and strongest acts with one of its youngest and most promising acts, this is an exceptional split EP. Separately, [DARYL] showcases its standard new wave meets post-hardcoreish punk while Black Tie Dynasty exhibits a bouncy kind of moody rock in the vein of the Cure and Echo & the Bunnymen. With collaborations between the bands, new songs, and a Ned's Atomic Dustbin cover, Bloody Basin runs the clichés of split EPs past but isn't tied down by a novelty factor. All six songs smoke in their own ways, especially the title track. (EG)

Idol Records, P.O. Box 720043, Dallas, TX 75372, [www.idolrecords.com](http://www.idolrecords.com)

### DOA – War on 45 (March to the End), CD

DOA released War on 45 in 1982, and the eight tracks have worn down a few needles on phonographs in the last 20+ years. This new version has seven of the original tracks with another 11 tacked on as a modern protest to the war we are currently fighting. This disc does a great job pulling together tracks from three different decades and still feels like one cohesive release. This either shows the quality in DOA's early releases or the fact that they haven't changed their tune much in the last two decades. The one track missing from the original 12" is "Let's Fuck," a track that never really fit on the original release and would stick out even more on this extended version. Several great covers make this a must-have for all music fans. DOA did a great job of covering Ranking Trevor's "War in the East" and the Dils' "Class War" (quite a task for a punk rock band). The only unreleased track on this disc, though relevant, is a rather typical cover of CCR's "Fortunate Son." I hope somehow this disc can catch on with the youth of today. The straightforward approach of DOA's songs may sound rather cliché and overdone to the older folks, but remember that they were first released during the Reagan years. (EA)

Sudden Death Records, Cascades P.O. Box 43001, Burnaby, BC, Canada V5G 3H0

### Danger Doom – The Mouse and the Mask CD

This team-up between multi-identity MC MF Doom

and producer Dangermouse arrives under the auspices of Cartoon Network's Adult Swim programming block. Adult Swim characters make both original and sampled appearances between and during tracks, while Dangermouse—most famous for his Beatles/Jay-Z mash-up *The Grey Album*—provides beats that subtly tweak hip-hop conventions. Doom, already obsessed enough with cartoons and comics to base his persona on the Fantastic Four villain, ups the ante and spins countless cartoon references into his lyrics. The cameos occasionally make *The Mouse and the Mask* sound like an album-length Adult Swim promo, but Dangermouse's beats mesh well enough with the prolific Doom that it's still a worthwhile addition to his growing discography. (AB)

Epitaph, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026

### Disrespect – Wartorn, 7"

Disrespect started out with an instant fan base. Featuring members of Misery, Civil Disobedience, Pissed, and Destroy, it was predetermined that this Minneapolis supergroup would go far. They've been putting out records almost dangerously quickly, bringing back classic Crass and Discharge-inspired hardcore punk to a new generation of smelly fans. Common in the genre are dual vocals, oftentimes a raging female voice in counterpoint to a raging male voice. Singer Molly's voice is too strong to compete with one male voice though, so Disrespect has three vocalists: Molly, Dre, and Dan. Maybe the dual vocals fad will be replaced by triple vocals. In any case, this record is another fantastic one. In a typical dick move to make record collectors cringe, a limited 300 copy single-sided EP called *We Are the Punx* was included with the tour edition of this instant classic. (AE)

Profane Existence, P.O. Box 8722, Minneapolis, MN 55408, [www.profanexist.com](http://www.profanexist.com)

### Eagle\*Seagull – S/T, CD

For a short, user-friendly recommendation, think of parts of the Arcade Fire and the Good Life amped up on caffeine. For a more coherent recommendation, this gives glam rock a good name. Lincoln, NE's Eagle\*Seagull hovers around slow atmospheric stuff while throwing in some really snappy parts. Up-tempo tracks like "Photograph" and "Your Beauty is a Knife I Turn on My Throat" keep the record from being trapped in the glacial spaces that bands like Radiohead paved the way for. The majority of the record is slow and burning, but thankfully not boring. Kudos to another band that makes vast-sounding songs that are incredibly accessible at the same time. (EG)

Paper Garden Records, 1900 Belmont Boulevard, BMH 431, Nashville, TN 37212, [www.papergardenrecords.com](http://www.papergardenrecords.com)

### East West Blast Test – Popular Music for Unpopular People, CD

Clocking in at just under 33 minutes, *Popular Music for Unpopular People* is the 23-track sophomore effort from long-distance rock buddies Chris Dodge (Spazz, No Use for a Name) and Dave Witte (Discordance Axis, Burnt by the Sun, Human Remains, Phantomsmasher). This time, Dodge has met Witte's pre-recorded beats with a much broader spectrum of musicality, with a premium placed on quirkiness and alternating genres. Saxophone, organ, buzzing electronics, and odd noises make guest (and sometimes regular) appearances; even a didgeridoo stops by to say hello.

on the album's final track. A few unadulterated punk/metal tunes ooze their way through the hodgepodge, but they're often the least interesting of the bunch. The talent of the duo is exhibited constantly throughout the course of the work, but Dodge's come off as being far more impressive. Fans of Witte's hardcore work should be aware that there is little to no blasting present, despite what the band's name connotes. (SJM)

Ipecac Recordings, PO Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94563, [www.ipecac.com](http://www.ipecac.com)

#### Exceptor – Sunbomber, CDEP

Mentioning that Exceptor is linked socially and sonically to music projects like No Neck Blues Band, Black Dice, Gang Gang Dance, and Animal Collective doesn't really get us any closer to defining exactly what Exceptor sound like—a tricky matter for even the band's most studious disciples. Built of equal parts outsider experimentation and pop refuse, the music of Exceptor is a hipster-damaged mess of chintzy synths, drum programming, field recordings, live drumming, inscrutable vocal utterances, and other sundry adjuncts both digital and primitive. Think *musique concrete*, think Throbbing Gristle, think 303-thumping acid tracks, think blunted dub, think hippie drum circles, and you're getting warmer. Mysterious and exotic, unbalanced and appealing, these are mad soundscapes of celebration. For those who've been following the band the last couple years, Sunbomber is perhaps closest to the live material they've continually posted on their website (and, in fact, Sunbomber was recorded live in July 2005). In the past, it could be said that some of the key Exceptor ingredients weren't too far removed from a kid manipulating the sound of his own voice through an electric fan. Perhaps due to the addition of Jon Nicholson to the line-up (while losing Calder Martin and the creepy/alluring coos of Caitlin Cook), this sense of quasi-accidental discovery is somewhat diminished on Sunbomber. Making up for that is probably the broadest palette of any Exceptor release to date, and what sounds to me like greater control over the band's evocative sonics. All the same, I'd sooner recommend KA (the CD of which includes the incredible *Vacation* EP) or Throne to anyone coming to Exceptor anew. (CB)

5 Rue Christine, PO Box 1190, Olympia, WA 98507, [www.exceptor.com](http://www.exceptor.com)

#### F-Box – EP:10:20, CDEP

On an anti-capitalist track called "Hollow Points," F-Box, AKA Gary Llama, a Maryland dude who hisses like Mike Ness over acoustic guitars details the woes of the world and implores his listeners to take a stand if only so "people see you standing." Then we have a track called "White Folks." Here, Llama strums a few chords and sings various incarnations of the line "White folks got a funny sense of \_\_\_\_\_. " Filling in the blank are words such as hip-hop, pride, god, and slavery. At the song's end, he breaks stride: "But white folks bleed like everyone else." Now, judging from his website, Llama appears to be a white folk himself. Which begs the question: is "White Folks" meant as an apologist anthem on behalf of white folks to non-white folks? Does his final line imply that white blood should be shed? Or is he merely standing so we can see him stand? (TS)

Self-released, [www.ovolr.org](http://www.ovolr.org).

#### Fourth Rotor – Plain, CD

After a solid debut full-length, Seize, these ex-members of V. Reverse, 8-Bark, and Ambition Mission are hitting their stride with an incredible follow-up. I said it once before and I'll say it again: this band is Paul Bunyan eating a bowl of hearty vegetable soup, listening to a lot of old blues, and then starting a punk band with a bunch of lumberjacks. They play music in between bouts of clothes-lining trees with enormous axes and having awesome bear sex. This Chicago beast plays some of the burliest punk you'll find on this end of the tundra. There are few comparable bands to make a solid reference point, but the go-to description is like a streamlined version of the Minutemen mixed with a rhythmic '90s post-punk flavor. The new songs have progressed into more cohesive interplay, with the band members sounding closer to a unit than three talented musicians colliding... (VC)

Underground Communiqué Records, 1200 W. Hood, Apt. 1, Chicago, IL 60660, [www.undercomm.org](http://www.undercomm.org), [www.fourthrotor.com](http://www.fourthrotor.com)

#### Fun 100 – Hit It & Quit It, CD

This debut from Canadian five-piece Fun 100 charges through at full speed with all the synth power anyone could possibly muster. Don't believe me? Further proof: they have a keytar. Shaky, high-pitched vocals shout forth anthems of teen angst, backed up by a wall of sugar-packed space rock. It's a quick ride as well, clocking in at just over 21 minutes. The lead makes like a frazzled robot on "Hygiene Boy," and the band as a whole shows the most promise on "Lost in New York," but overall, it's another stab at the tired genre of pop punk. There are a few strange pop culture references here, such as half-covering *Freak Nasty's* "Da Dip" in "D2," as well a track title that mocks another independent band ("...And You Will Know Us By the Trail of Preemies"). As the name would imply, yes, Fun 100 takes a light approach to their music. It does seem they're setting the bar pretty low in their ironic references, though I suppose "pop punk" has a better ring to it than "post-new wave." (SBM)

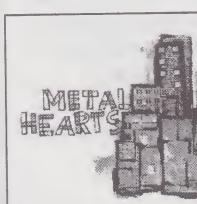
Hockey Dad Records, 4150 Brant St., Vancouver, BC, V5N 5B4 Canada

#### Guaranteed Katch – In a Sumptuous Brown Gravy, LP

If you've ever been terrified of clowns or wary of the circus, or if you're prone to nightmares or ready to take some heavy drugs, Guaranteed Katch might be the wrong band for you. Like a hellish clan of makeup wearing demons, Guaranteed Katch blaze through a truly bizarre mix of hardcore punk rock, blood-coagulating psychedelia, and Zappa-pleasing experimentalism. In a Sumptuous Brown Gravy could easily score a cartoon that aims to scare children straight, or perhaps instigate a suburban nutter to start a round of skull harvesting. Over the course of the album's 16 tracks the songs never lighten up or get less unsettling. It's the work of three slightly deranged fellas from Boston who relish the idea of inciting fear with music. This trio of sound terrorists has crafted easily one of the most creative records I've heard in a long time. With a strong stomach for deliberate creepiness, In a Sumptuous Brown Gravy is a jaw-dropping and satisfying record unlike anything else today. Whether or not their record sees many spins is unimportant; experiencing Guaranteed Katch is not

of the organ permeates "I Am Pentagon," and an acidic guitar roars through "Born on the Floor." It doesn't matter that this show happened five years ago, and that Make Up are no longer together, because you have this record as a testament to their legacy. When Svenonius belts out the last track, "C'mon Let's Spawn," you almost comply—holding your breath and sidling up next to your vibrating speaker. Let yourself submit to this rock 'n' roll gospel experience with yelps and hollers that will run down your spine and shoot out your fingers as you lift them towards the sky. You may not have been there at Washington DC's Black Cat Club to see this unfold, but now you can be. (AA)

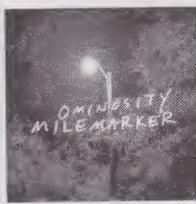
Drag City Records, PO Box 476867, Chicago, IL 60647, [dragcity.com](http://dragcity.com)



#### Metal Hearts – Socialize, CD

Baltimore's Metal Hearts have taken me by surprise. The newest addition to the Suicide Squeeze family, Metal Hearts is comprised of two teenagers who write songs about love, breakups, friends, and growing up. Sure, that may sound like the perfect equation for an MTV pop emo band, but Metal Hearts are far from such a travesty. A drum machine spilling simple beats provides the rhythm for the 11 tracks, while the two teenagers concentrate on adding guitar, keys, vocals, and saxophone to the mix. At times very reminiscent of Modest Mouse, and at other times creating their own unique blend of sound, Metal Hearts has created a very beautiful and easily listenable record with their bedroom-rock feel. Oftentimes, when I hear another band that sounds quite a bit like a more popular group (i.e. Modest Mouse), I will immediately turn my back on them. However, Metal Hearts is different. True, the way their lyrics are set up, their vocals, some of their guitar work, and the way their songs are arranged mimic a slower Modest Mouse, but, in this case, I don't think their similarities are a bad thing. Listening to this band, I would never think of the inclusion of a sax would work, but on "Gentleman's Spell" and "Sunray," the instrument sounds natural. Another powerful instrument Metal Hearts takes full advantage of is the two teenagers' voices. Their unique melodies and layers bring an appealing twist to the table. At first, the extremely simple drumbeats annoyed me, but I quickly came to the realization that anything busier would overcomplicate things and take the focus away from the instrumentation and vocals. Socialize is quite the record—in fact, it would probably be the best record I've heard so far this year. Who says that age matters? (MB)

Suicide Squeeze Records, PO Box 80511, Seattle, WA, 98108, [www.suicidesqueeze.net](http://www.suicidesqueeze.net)



#### Milemarker – Onimosity, CD

A few years ago, Milemarker were, in my eyes, one of the best bands I'd heard or seen. Their live show was something pretty spectacular. It was about three years ago that I literally witnessed the implosion of the band—without realizing it at the time—and just like that, they were gone. In the passing of those three years, they found themselves removed from their previous record label, publicist, and out one key member in the lovely and talented Roby. I think it was the fact that she was gone which left me with the most concern, because she really added a lot to the band's unique sound and had quite a voice, contributing to a perfect balance of male and female vocals. So, the question is, does this "new" version of Milemarker stand up to the great legacy they've had thus far? The answer is a pleasing yes. Milemarker could be one of the most punk bands to come around in a very long time, but not punk in the expected three-chord power sound that has become associated with the genre. Instead, it's punk in the fact that it dares be different, thought-provoking, and spits in the face of pre-conceived expectations. The music on this Milemarker disc is as varied as the rotating crew of members that has become part of their extended family. There are quiet, peaceful numbers ("Killed on Public Transit"), more aggressive, synth-laced tracks you'd think were recorded for Anesthetic ("Food Chain"), aggressive building epics ("Sun Out" and "Rivers of Blood"), and even bluesy type drinking songs such as "Rambler". They're all over the map here, continuing their trend of going off in a direction you didn't quite expect. So, three years off and rotating some members hasn't done them any harm at all. While I'll always be a little sad that my favorite member has left, I'm glad to have them back and hope it won't take another three years for the next round of new material. (MXV)

Eyeball Records, [www.eyeballrecords.com](http://www.eyeballrecords.com)



#### Propagandhi – Potemkin City Limits, CD

I think I'd really like to hang out with these guys. Right there in their bio, it says "music journalism is stenography." That being said by the band I'm supposed to be reviewing, I feel like what I'm doing here is utterly pointless, which I suppose it is. I like to think that the difference between me and stereotypical reviewers, though, is that I've actually been in a lot of bands that have played to empty rooms or to our friends (who could have just come by practice if they wanted to). Reviewing this record would be pointless if I were to give it a bad review. Recommending something, on the other hand . . . my job feels more like I'm spreading the good word.

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



### Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

**Violent Anal Death, S/T.** Cover songs pose serious problems for punk bands: everyone plays them at one time or another, but most of us get sick of them quickly. In the '90s, punk bands redoing non-punk songs were epidemic, and band after band churned out lame goofy updated versions of songs that sucked in the first place. Simultaneous to the covers boom was a street punk boom, often resulting in horrendous spiky updates of the worst pop and metal songs imaginable. Providence's Violent Anal Death ingeniously conquered the street punk cover on this brilliant 12 song EP of fast, infallible renditions of their favorite TV themes and commercial jingles. There are a few originals thrown in, but it's their versions of songs like "Juicy Fruit," "Hungry Hungry Hippo," and "Fat Albert" that make this blazing record so historically significant. Besides the parody CTW cover art, there was also an unforgettable alternative sleeve produced in limited quantities of Bert and Ernie having some fun with a puddle of ejaculate. Violent Anal Death still plays reunion shows, but for those not near RI, this must-own 7" is your ticket to the best punk covers ever recorded.

**My turntable, CD, and DVD player seem to prefer these mainline releases lately:** GG Allin & the Murder Junkies, *Terror in America: Live 1993 DVD*; *V/A, If It Ain't Cheap, It Ain't Punk CD*; *Radio Beats, Ready to Shake LP*; *Bad Religion, Live at the Palladium DVD*; *Skin Disorder, Scars and Stripes 7"*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Mor Fleisher (MF)

**Electric Eels, Having a Philosophical Investigation With.** The Electric Eels never actually recorded an album—not in a recording studio at least. These songs were recorded live at a beat up loft in 1975. They are the essential archetypes of what the Electric Eels were: smart, poor, and alcohol-enthused. The Electric Eels are the long lost lo-fi starlets of the Cleveland punk-rock community: a legacy in the same way the Screamers is a Los Angeles legacy. The Eels should not have had to record a studio album for their talent to be recognized; a good song is a good song, and man, did these guys write good songs! They did what the Gories have done since the '80s, only the Electric Eels did it a decade earlier. They did it in an era when disco was queen and the Ramones were just another no-name band from New York City. The only problem was, of course, lack of documentation. This album was released in 1989. Apparently, somebody had the bright idea that it, finally, needed to be done. We're all reaping the benefits of that idea. Or we should be. It makes me depressed that nobody talks/writes/mentions/anything about the Electric Eels. It makes me sad that this band was the best musical achievement to ever come out of Cleveland and so many have no clue. Put down the Dead Boys records. That's kids' stuff. Listen to the Electric Eels. They're not just for audiophile hermits anymore!

**Top five records that you should be listening to, too:** Dream Syndicate, *The Days of Wine and Roses*; David Bowie, *Love You Till Tuesday*; the Velvet Underground, *White Light/White Heat*; Black Time, *Blackout*; Suicide, *Alive*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Grubbs (EG)

**Handsome, S/T.** In a time well after grunge had lost its bite, and before nu-metal became moronic and contrived, anything could be considered major-label hard rock in 1997. Comprised of ex-members of Helmet, Quicksand, Iceburn, Murphy's Law, and Cro-Mags, Handsome had an incredible amount of potential in this vacuum. Mixing the moody, detuned heaviness of their older bands with poppy melodies, Handsome presents a band with a lot of bang. With a blow-out-your-eardrums kind of mix, Handsome sounds very modern by today's standards. The notable exception is that instead of the standard, sing-through-the-nose vocal technique that so many bands embrace today, vocalist Jeremy Chatelain projects a clear and aggressive voice devoid of sap. Plus, thanks to Terry Date's production, the band sounds incredibly heavy, but not sloppy, muddy, or cheesy. Though the band's career was doomed early on (various band members made no bones about not getting along with each other in interviews), they held it together long enough to make something fantastic.

**Workin' hard hardly workin':** Tom Waits, *Used Songs X, Make the Music Go Bang!*; Belle and Sebastian, *The Life Pursuit*; Against Me!, *Searching for a Former Clarity*; Explosions in the Sky, *The Earth is not a Cold Dead Place*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

**I Hate Myself, S/T.** People, this is emo. Not that shit on MTV or the local alternative radio station. In 1997, this trio released what has to be the most heart-wrenching record I own. The music exists to be dynamic . . . from the entirely low-volume (and featuring no drums) "Kind of a Long Way Down," to the immediately loud "Destroy all Monsters," this record is all over the place. The vocals help along the depressing nature of the album (also known as 10 Songs), as vocalist and guitarist Jim Marburger either sings his lyrics like a timid schoolboy with a crush or belts them out in a scream that sounds like his soul is being ripped apart by a former lover. Guess what? The songs are about love and the terrible things that can happen when you get wrapped up in its spell, but take a unique slant. Most songs work either like a conversation between either two people or one person that might be writing in a diary or screaming at a photograph of an ex, and it really hits home, because most everyone has felt that way at one point or another. I know I have, and I sure did listen to a lot of this band at the time. Stereotypical, I know, but I Hate Myself's music really fits that just-got-dumped disposition. They only released this one full-length album, and it's a doozy. Pick it up and get depressed.

**The sun is shining on me, finally. Finally:** Apocalypse Hoboken, *Easy Instructions for Complex Machinery*; the Casket Lottery, *Survival is for Cowards*; Jaylib, *Champion Sound* (RIP J Dilla); INI, *Center of Attention*, *Artifacts*, *Between a Rock and a Hard Place*.

something listeners will likely forget. (SRM)

Equation Records, c/o William Bailey, 10 South Street #75  
(Summit View), Danbury, CT 06810-3104 [www.chronoglide.com/equation.html](http://www.chronoglide.com/equation.html)

### Hanks, the – Your New Attraction, CD

On the surface, this sounds like the typical melancholy-meets-pop-punk schlock splattered all across the mall-punk nation. However, there are plenty curveballs on *Your New Attraction*: these songs don't have the usual restrictions that prevent other bands like this to grow. The Hanks aren't steeped in one style and they don't hop musical genres like they're playing hopscotch. There is a nice blend of styles here (complete with keyboards, strings, and horns in spots) and it's not a throw-it-together-and-see-what-sticks kind of approach. This reminds me of what Gatsby's American Dream does successfully, and a part of me wishes other young bands would also take this approach. (EG)

Caffeine Teen Records, P.O. Box 4006, Sunland, CA 91041, [www.caffeineteen.com](http://www.caffeineteen.com)

### Hawthorne Heights – If Only You Were Lonely, CD

I have come to a conclusion regarding the overwhelming popularity of Hawthorne Heights. I never really paid them much attention, but after repeated listens of *If Only You Were Lonely*, I realized that they are essentially everything a teenage pop-punk fan could want. They have the by-the-book romantic but self-deprecating lyrics, catchy hooks, melodic "mosh" parts, mild teen angst screaming, and videos featuring their around the world guitar throws. Regardless, there isn't much really separating them from the slew of other bands of this ilk. Lyrically, they leave much to be desired and spit lines on par with mediocre teenage poetry. Aside from a few clever quotes here and there, the words are so embarrassing I can't believe a grown man would write them. However, many of the songs are so undeniably catchy, they end up stuck in my head for days. I liken Hawthorne Heights to having an affair. You know what you're doing is cheap and not worth the effort, yet the exhilaration keeps you going back for more. (SK)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St. Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com)

### Hinds, Erik – Reign in Blood, CD

So, I was listening to CDs to assign to people, and something about this really stuck out to me when I tossed this in . . . holy shit, this is *Reign in Blood*! But, instead of being Slayer, it's played entirely by one man on a crazy 18-stringed guitar/cello hybrid sort of instrument called a H'arpegiione. (Note: spell check had no spelling suggestions for that one.) As a huge fan of the original record, this was more than a nostalgia trip to listen to . . . it was actually quite challenging. I spent most of the time being confused by what part of the song we were on, and then there would be some sort of break that would totally snap me back to knowing exactly where in the album I was. Take the transition from "Altar of Sacrifice" to "Jesus Saves," for example: classic and instantly recognizable. "Raining Blood" was a highlight, as this version is very beautiful sounding. This is a really cool disc for those looking to see *Reign in Blood* in a different light. (DH)

Sol ponticello, [www.solponticello.com](http://www.solponticello.com)

### HiSoft – Amateur, CDEP

Since the inception of rock 'n' roll, Brits and Americans have always played tug-of-war with each other's musical developments. Over the years, the Atlantic intermingling has both kindled and stagnated the progression of mainstream and subsurface sounds. Philadelphia's HiSoft borrows a good portion of their delicate pop terrain from their limey counterparts while also incorporating postmodern American tactics. Boasting a cast of members that have played with a multitude of indie staples such as the Hot Snakes, Ink and Dagger, Burning Brides, Scout Niblet, and the Lily's, it comes as no surprise that HiSoft delivers effectively. After two years of brew time, their culmination of abundant layering, shoe-gazing romantics, and breathy vocals makes for a stylishly remarkable debut EP. (BM)

Chocolate Hearts, P.O. Box 554, Philadelphia, PA 19105

### Holy Ghost Revival – Bleeding Light, CD

The one reason this album should be horrible is the reason this album is great. This reason: it sounds like a rock musical. It's not, but it sounds like one. Seriously, like a modern day *Rocky Horror*, but so much better. There's more punk rock than cheese, and as I imagine it, more blood than makeup. The music is grandiose and orchestral, but it's also snotty, spastic, and out of control. The band builds up a blistering gothic melody, only to beat the hell out of it, leaving it whimpering in the background. I kept waiting for the one wrong move that would suck the life out, but this debut kept its momentum at each step. As it turns out, the caustic sound of *Bleeding Light* is incredibly engaging. The songs rise and fall, sucking you in, daring you not to listen. Normally, I don't go for this sort of thing, but these dark-minded maestros left me completely entertained for the better part of an hour, and that's a good job in my book. (MP)

Jonny Cat Records, no contact info, [www.holyghostrevival.com](http://www.holyghostrevival.com)

### Hudson Falcons – La Famiglia, CD

The fascinating thing about Jersey's Hudson Falcons is that they exhibit a strong sense of Americana in a genre mainly fixated on the hard-drinking, working class cultures of Europe. Instead of emulating the Pogues and getting red-faced over a blind allegiance to Arsenal, these boys channel Springsteen and probably think Steve Bartman is the quintessential Cubs fan (and I'll toast a stout to that sentiment). Already well established, this third outing solidly blends energetic, straightforward street punk with the tunefulness of folky American rock. After hearing plenty of failed attempts in that whole alt-country hoo-hah, this is one of the most successful ones since Avail's *Dixie*. The Hudson Falcons carry a musically diverse catalog, shifting from a bluesy, slide guitar-ridden ballad to boozy, singalong-filled shitzkickers over the course of the album. There are a couple of touches that sound like contrived homage (such as the extended instrumental jam on "Jersey City Streets"), but if it helps inspire the more brilliant parts, then I'm all for it. (VC)

Street Anthem Records, P.O. Box 2181530 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA 19102, [www.streetanthemrecords.com](http://www.streetanthemrecords.com), [www.hudsonfalcons.com](http://www.hudsonfalcons.com)

**In Arcadia – If It Bleeds, We Can Kill It, CD**

He's fine now, just back away slowly. I think he's gotten over his spell. His anger seems to have subsided considerably. He appears to be doing much better. Oh, but what's this? Oh, goodness, he's breaking things again and really jackhammering his head and neck! Is that foam? But wait, now he's back to being cool as a cucumber. These mood swings are a bitch. Joseph Enos gets them, and it makes In Arcadia's debut record something of a slasher flick: always aware that you're getting set up for something scary and intense. In Enos's case: a bloodbath of chugging guitars and tire-popping vocals that, seconds earlier, were singing babies to bed. (SM)  
[www.inarcadia.net](http://www.inarcadia.net)

**J Church/Minority Blues Band – Split, 7"**

I think this is J Church's 19th split 7", and their second with Minority Blues Band. Whoa. Once again, we get two songs from each band. The J Church side has one original in the mid-tempo/quiet verses/loud choruses mold, and a decent, if unremarkable, cover of Wire's "Ex-Lion Tamer." The original, "Aeroplane Angel," is classic J Church pop punk, so by this point in time you should know if you'll like that or not. I'm on the "like it" side of that debate, and I've got to give Lance Hahn credit for the consistent quality of his songwriting over 14 years and several lineup changes. Minority Blues Band were a Japanese group who broke up in 2004, and that's a shame because their songs here are excellent guitar-driven pop punk. It might be worth mentioning that their side of this single starts out with some guitar feedback that sounds exactly like my apartment's intercom, which prompted me to take the needle off the record and go answer the door. It took three attempts at playing the song before I realized it was feedback and not some neighborhood kids pranking me. So, uh, you've been warned. Back on topic, the Minority Blues Band do one great original and a cool, energetic cover of the Newtown Neurotics' "My Death." All in all, this is a nice little record for fans of classic pop punk. (JC)  
Underground Communique, 1220 West Hood Ave #1, Chicago, IL 60660, [www.undercomm.org](http://www.undercomm.org)

**Jukebox Zeroes – Four on the Floor, CD**

The four members in Jukebox Zeroes have probably worn out more pairs of Chuck Taylors than you thought ever existed in the world. They've likely been told by everyone who loves them that it's really about time they figure out what they want to do with their lives. This rock 'n' roll thing needs to be sorted out. But it consumes these Philly veterans, and this is the music that is brought on by years of doing it: clean, boozy, and full of high spirits. *Four on the Floor* is packed to the gills with all the beer-fueled octane it takes to play loud and well. You'll know when each has their mid-life crisis: it will involve a new pair of Chucks and something that can make ears bleed more. (SM)  
[www.jukeboxzeroes.com](http://www.jukeboxzeroes.com)

**Love of Everything – Superior Mold and Die, CD**

Bobby Burg is one of those dudes who kind of grabs you by the gullet, by the shoulders, and by the hair (this is all completely figuratively I'd like to point out) and demands some form of attention, whether it be disapproval, encouragement, or confusion. He must

get visited in the night by some strange muses—creatures that have continued to hold his hands on his musical odyssey of substantial quirkiness. Lyrics such as "You ought to be on top of me / but you're just too bloody," from *Superior Mold and Die's* "Too Much Happy Wet Hair" should be enough evidence that we're dealing with a mind that floats where it wants. Burg, whose helium whine has become more of an instrument than a grenade (as it sometimes was on past efforts), cultivates split personalities that set you aback with their stranger qualities and draw you in, like you're on the end of a rod and reel, with their off-kilter accessibility. (SM)  
[www.recordlabelrecordlabel.com](http://www.recordlabelrecordlabel.com)

**Meat Depressed – Fat, Drunk & Stoopid, CD**

I'm going to be stating the obvious several times in this review. When your band is called Meat Depressed, and your album is called *Fat, Drunk & Stoopid*, it's a safe bet that you're not expecting people to take you all that seriously. When your songs have titles like "Romeo Ain't Julie Yet" and "(I Wanna Be in the) Witness Protection Program," it's pretty clear that you're more interested in having fun than making any sort of "statement." When you include a cover of Joe Jackson's "One More Time," it's obvious that you have great taste in music and your roots go further back than those of most of today's groups. When you sound like a cross between the Dwarves and the Queers, it's a no-brainer that you don't give a shit about what's popular these days and you're just doing what you want. This record is straight-up punk rock good times, and you can never go wrong with that. (JC)

*Good Cop/Bad Cop Records*, P.O. Box 633, Foxborough, MA 02055, [www.goodcopbadcoprecords.com](http://www.goodcopbadcoprecords.com)

**Mercury Radio Theater – The Blue-Eyed Model, CD**

Now, who does this? It can't be commercially viable, but neither is writing record reviews for a goddamn living. Making a record that is part everything-and-the-kitchen-sink musical album/variety show and partly a diabolical story—about a collegiate named Gregor who orders a girl in a box, uses corpse parts to construct her, and then finds something wrong with her—that could have been co-authored by Kafka and Kepi of the Groovie Ghoulies seems to be a real shot in the dark. It is, but it makes for an intriguing listen. The same kind of experience that must have made listeners keep tuning in to old-time serial radio programs to hear how the Lone Ranger got himself out of that bind, or whodunit dinner theater murder mysteries. We're lucky to get all the gory dirt in 19 tracks. (SM)  
[www.lujorecords.com](http://www.lujorecords.com)

**Merzbow & John Wiese – Multiplication, CD**

It's hard, if not impossible, to tell where Merzbow leaves off and John Wiese begins on these noise provocateurs' first formal collaboration. The distinction is best left to past characterization: Merzbow creates blistering drones of beyond-in-the-red feedback, while Wiese creates grating pulses with a few more jump-cuts. Both comprise the bulk of *Multiplication*, created via a Postal Service-style tape trade. Wiese produced Merzbow's noise on the disc's first tracks, while Merzbow (AKA Masami Akita) returned the favor on the 27-minute title track to close the CD. Nonetheless, all selections segue into a massive blob

I'm like Jesus! OK, music is all about taking chances. Unfortunately, that's not something that your average music consumer is willing to do in this day and age. Buy something I haven't already heard? Are you out of your mind? Propagandhi, though, haven't failed to deliver the goods yet and started making great punk records before such a thing as downloading existed. With their great track record intact, it's safe to take a chance on Propagandhi with their newest offering. In fact, it's not really even taking a chance. It's more of a sure thing. A quality punk band with a quality message and quality guitar licks. Not only can this band rip (see the album opener and "Superbowl Patriot Xxvi"), but they can write a great pop song ("Cut Into the Earth"). In a nutshell, it doesn't really matter what I say, because Propagandhi are more punk than I could ever hope to be, and I love them for that. Plus, I totally shoplifted their first record. (DH)

*Fat Wreck Chords*, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, [www.fatwreck.com](http://www.fatwreck.com)

**Rum & Rebellion – S/T, CD**

Lots of folks know Salinas, California for its place in literature, where John Steinbeck culled narratives of the working class quietly wrestling with the American dream. Migrant workers, a darker shade of brown, continue to settle in that town in the tradition of pursuing happiness through hard labor. It's a new narrative of immigrants, ones who have come to this country carrying with them the inalienable right to raise families against a culture who have deemed them illegal aliens. Rum & Rebellion was born from this history and hypocrisy, describing their

music as "straight from the heart and a bit from the hips." George Sanchez, guitarist and vocalist, spins stories so honest and sincere you feel like you're listening to an old friend while perched on a barstool under amber lights. With bassist Joe Hunt and drummer Scott MacDonald, Rum & Rebellion (R & R) churn out country-inspired folk-esque music that is reminiscent of Fifteen and Against Me!, with seething ferocity and deeply personal odes. R & R offers us a type of socio-political commentary that is missing from our collective music collection, shedding light on a community built by migrant workers and their daily plight. Sanchez's voice strains, coarse and rough, like the words to his songs, wrapping us in stories of death and the living who are slowly dying ("Oh Salinas," "El Corrido de Oscar") and bittersweet tales of the heart ("Bye Bye Anne," "This Sin"). This DIY record is free from any pretense or illusions of grandeur, put out by the band itself. There's humility in their songs, where you feel like they're trying the best they can, and that's really all we want. The reality of revolution is that it's a slow upheaval, a marathon—not a sprint. R & R knows that it takes one step at a time: "Used to be a socialist and I used to carry a card / I used to sell our paper to the students in the yard / Wondered why no one bought it / then I walked into the street / Realized no one bought it 'cause they needed something to eat" ("The Turning Point"). (AA)

Self-released, [rumandrebellion.com](http://rumandrebellion.com)

**Tunng – Mother's Daughter and Other Songs, CD**

Experimental indie pop for the subdued crowd, this album was originally released in the UK in 2005 and is finally seeing stateside release courtesy of Ace Fu. Tunng have established an intriguing yet ultimately strange pairing of electronic squashings and folk-tinged chants but ramble too much to be deemed "electro-folk" or to claim the unfortunate tag of "folktronica." The two elements are there, for sure, but they continually

knock against each other in the most endearing fashion. "Pool Beneath the Pond" is an early favorite, as banjo, upright bass, samples, and far off noises become seamlessly incorporated into the composition. To isolate a sound, pinpoint it, then pair it with another disparate yet complementary reaction is no easy feat, but Tunng make it sound effortless. The duo sings of typewriters and transistor radios on "Song of the Sea" behind scribbles and sparse banjo while "Beautiful and Light" employs the greatest use of train noise samples I have ever heard, incorporating them kindly into a quick electro-lullaby of guitar loops. When encouraged by a refrain to "slow down a moment," you can't help but oblige. Later on, the duo displays their British roots on "Fair Doreen" with a quick, updated take on a more traditional-sounding tune imploring a woman that she "art not Satan's girl." The folk side of things comes across as more accomplished and natural, though the homespun beats and samples add needed texture to the background. Given that this is only two people, there's an awful lot going on with the complex layers, random sounds, and the occasional sample tossed in for good measure. Fans of the Books or anyone missing the Beta Band will adore this record, and everyone else can appreciate the incredibly spacious and open qualities amid the layers. A unique and striking release, *Mother's Daughter* may not be precise "folktronica," but it is certainly something worth repeated listens. (SBM)

*Ace Fu Records*, P.O. Box 552, New York, NY 10009, [www.acefu.com](http://www.acefu.com)

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS



### Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

**Funkadelic, S/T.** Released in 1970, this is the debut album by the kings of acid rock, Funkadelic. Not to be mistaken with Parliament, George Clinton's dance-funk group of the same era, Funkadelic was originally its own, separate, hard-rocking, monster. (The two groups did subsequently combine and became known as P-Funk). In the late '60s, the Parliaments, a vocal quintet led by Clinton, moved from New Jersey to Detroit in an attempt to get signed by Motown Records. They picked up a backing band of ragged, wild-eyed, dope-smoking, LSD-abusing black youth who were as influenced by the empowering anthems of Sly Stone and the gigantic, blues-based riffs of Jimi Hendrix as they were more traditional soul and R&B. When the Motown thing fell through (apparently the label had enough soul groups already), Clinton decided to give the younger musicians artistic license and let them take the group into heavier, freakier terrain. By combining the five-part vocal harmony of Clinton and his back-up singers with the grooving, slithery jams created by guitarists Eddie Hazel and Tawl Ross, bassist Billy Nelson, organist Mickey Atkins, and drummer Tiki Fullwood, the newly christened Funkadelic created a sound that tapped into the trust, dirtiest, smelliest—"funkiest"—nature of mankind. When we exert ourselves, physically or mentally, we sweat and stink. Oh, you can try to cover it up with perfume or cologne or whatever, but that fucking stink means you're alive, man. And, when you stop stinking and reeking, it means you're dead.

**Five on the jukebox:** Cathedral, The Serpent's Gold; Goatwhore, Funeral Dirge for the Rotting Sun; Indian, The Unquiet Sky; the Sadies, Favourite Colours; Trailer Bride, Whine de Lune.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Scott Jones (SJ)

**Praxis, Transmutation (Mutatis Mutandis).** What do you get when you combine one part production guru Bill Laswell, one part drummer Brain, two parts P-Funk (Bootsy Collins and Bernie Worrell), one part artificial chicken (AKA Buckethead), one part co-inventor of hip hop (DJ Afrika Bambaataa), and put them in a blender? You get one brilliantly strange album that only Bill Laswell could curate. Laswell doesn't even play bass on *Transmutation*, but the fact that he assembled the musicians, co-wrote the music, produced the record, and released it on his own label makes it his baby for sure. Instead, Monsieur Bootsy Collins covers the low end space rumble in his own inimitable way. This album is so freaky I don't even know where to start. "Blast/War Machine Dub" begins with a death metal riff and Buckethead's superhuman atonal shredding and then segues on a dime into a dub riddim. Everyone gets to shine here and with such unique musical personalities this is anything but a jazzy jam fest. On "Black Science Navigator," Bambaataa puts most DJs to shame with a solo performance that breaks all the rules as to what a DJ does. Bootsy treats us to his Humpty sounding voice on "Animal Behavior," and Buckethead chimes in with guitar, Japanese toy robots (a toy robot!), and karate chops throughout. Side two is very strange, and not for the musically faint of heart. Bernie Worrell turns in the best free keyboard playing next to Cecil Taylor, but of course far spacier than anything Taylor's done.

**Translucent Announcements:** Gris Gris, For the Season; Wolf Eyes, Burned Mind; Una Corda, Proper Position for Floating (1881); Ex-Models, Chrome Panthers; Boredoms, Seadrift/House of Sun.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Steve Kane (SK)

**Chamberlain, The Moon My Saddle.** In 1996, Chamberlain re-released their now classic LP, *Fate's got a Driver*. It was originally recorded and released a year prior under the bands former name, Split Lip. The change in name signified a turning point, as they shed the skin of their former sound and look, and grew into one shaped dramatically by Southern Indiana life. From that point the days of stage dives were replaced with cowboy boots and a self-awareness only matched by a few. *The Moon My Saddle* was the first proper Chamberlain full length, and it reflected the years of hard work and growth of the band enormously. The lyrics, musicianship, artwork, and recording form a cohesive package exemplifying the beauty and desolation of life in the Midwest. The punk-rock foundation of earlier efforts was replaced by a strong backbone of American rock and roll, soul, and blues. Vocalist David Moore put himself out on the line even more as an author writing tales of late nights, long drives, empty streets, open skies, and a silence that only inhabitants of small towns know. I know the majority will always say that *Fate's Got a Driver* is the superior Chamberlain LP, but as someone with roots grounded in central Illinois, I think I will always relate to *The Moon My Saddle* more.

**"It's been a lonesome song of a day":** Turn Cold, S/T 7"; Page France, Hello, Dear Wind; Fireworks, Can't Hardly Wait Demo; Chapterhouse, Whirlpool; Hum, Downward is Heavenward.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Chay Lawrence (CL)

**Integrity, Those Who Fear Tomorrow.** While Cro-Mags' *Age of Quarrel* would be the album that most would pick as the cornerstone for the music we refer to today as "metalcore," I have no doubt that it was Integrity's *Those Who Fear Tomorrow* that crystallized the movement, for better or worse, into the shape it has taken for the previous 15 years (and it has really been that long?). It was also the album that finalized my transition from longhaired death metal kid to skinhead straight-edger at the age of 16—the metallic bombast and dark lyrics providing an easy transition to a more misanthropic personal agenda, a self-destructive belligerence. A natural by-product of the late-'80s straightedge scene, Integrity took the flip side of the coin, a road less traveled at the time—where others espoused positivity and creativity, Integrity gave us despair and death. Roaring confessions of violence and abuse, singer Dwid was often buried under the combined weight of the huge riffs and lumbering breakdowns, usually accompanied by epic Metallica-esque guitar solos. The sound of a million floor punches and windmilling Jordans; but later wracked by a revolving door of members and solo projects that ranged from noise to neo-folk,

of explosions and rumbles. Highlights include "Luxor Skyship," which climaxes in a piercingly dissonant, high-octave whine, and "Multiplication," which carries the disc's building momentum into a snow cave and flogs it repeatedly in a sizzling slow-burn. (TS) Misanthropic Agenda Records, [www.misanthropicagenda.com](http://www.misanthropicagenda.com).

### Mind Controls – S/T, CD

Get hypnotized by the dirty, jangly, guitars of good ol' fashioned Americana via fun, spastic garage rock from . . . Canadians! One-man band BBQ's Mark Sultan, Ysael Pepin from Demon's Claw, and a drummer called the Duke make up Mind Controls' raucous, upbeat '60s-inspired rock noise. If you dug the double-uno pairing of non-Americans attacking the soulful sounds of the country-influenced music of the King Kahn and BBQ Show, you'll definitely be dropping the needle on this record quite often. In a little over 20 minutes, Mind Controls squeeze out 11 spazzy tracks that'll make you shake your ass like you're part of the world's shortest dance marathon. A seething call to get everyone to hate you through "Mind Control" is a mix tape must-have. "Paralyzed" is a halting love-at-first-sight ode for all the cute strangers your eyes have met and are hoping to meet again. Put on your best shoes and get your toes tappin'! (AA) Dirthnap Records, 2615 SE Clinton St., Portland, OR 97202. [dirthnaprecords.com](http://dirthnaprecords.com)

### Modernettes – Get It Straight, CD

The Modernettes were one of the many unheralded greats from the fertile Vancouver scene of the early '80s. Playing gritty new wave punk with melody and hooks to spare, they somehow slipped through the cracks and never got the recognition they truly deserved. Maybe it's because they couldn't decide if they were a punk band or a new wave pop band, but hearing this stuff now, it's hard to imagine why many of these songs weren't hits. Guitarist and singer Buck Cherry truly had a knack for pop songwriting, best evidenced on the amazing "Confidential." Who can't relate to a chorus of, "This is strictly confidential / I'm only talking to the ceiling"? Other standouts are the bouncy punk ditties "Barbra" and "Celebrity Crackup," the jangly pop of "Rebel Kind," and the sublime cover of "Femme Fatale." On a recent trip to Canada, I tried in vain to find Modernettes records to buy, so I couldn't have been happier when I got this disc for review. *Get It Straight* collects 25 songs from the Modernettes too-short career, giving us Johnny-Born-Latelys a chance to discover the greatness for ourselves. I'm reluctant to say this is essential because of the universality of that word, so let's go with extremely highly recommended. (JC) Sudden Death Records, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC, V5G 3H0, Canada, [www.suddendeath.com](http://www.suddendeath.com)

### Moggs – The White Belt is Not Enough, CD

Most bands these days waste no time when it comes to pushing product into people's hands and buzzing their names into people's ears. Moggs has taken a decidedly different path. Forming in 1995, the Bay Area duo slowly earned their place in the scene by playing shows here and there. Ten years after the group's inception, Moggs has released *The White Belt is Not Enough*, an album four years in the making. The carefully considered Moggs aesthetic is one of fuzzy, slightly messy noise rock that sometimes breaks for

dancing. The band pays heavy dues to Sonic Youth and Royal Trux, with drummer/singer Miss Minor coping Kim Gordon's deadpan delivery and guitarist Sir Plus making off with a boatload of crackling guitar tone. At times, the band's hard work seems worth it. "Cubby Bear" is deliberate and forcefully rocking; "Take Take Take" sizzles like lava slowly descending a volcano's side, and "All About the Feeling" finds Plus ripping riffs out of his guitar with a monkey wrench. Other times, it's hard to believe this album took more than a couple months to kick out. Moggs cover the same few pitches and intervals so completely that by the ninth or tenth song, it all sounds the same. Moggs has done a good job at defining a signature sound, but *The White Belt* isn't really a convincing argument for four years of studio time. (SRM) Absolutely Kosher Records, 1412 10th Street, Berkeley, CA 94710-1512. [www.absolutelykasher.com](http://www.absolutelykasher.com)

### Moi? – S/T, CD

I'd like to think I have a tolerance for just about anything that comes across my desk, but records like Moi? manage to test the limits of my patience. Moi? could only exist in New York City, and I'll tell you why. There, discernable music taste takes a close fourth to other more important attributes such as fashion sense, sex appeal, and overall kitsch value. Enter Moi?'s self-titled record, which is nothing more than glorified lounge/disco that will undoubtedly gain a certain amount of notoriety due to its seemingly shocking lyrics and presumably the band's "outrageous" performances. Sadly for Moi?, however, we live in post-modern times where simply penning a song called "Angelpussy" doesn't translate as rebellious or even funny. In some parts of the Lower East Side, in fact, it's already passe. What I'm trying to say is this: it's going to take more than buying an inflatable penis at Ricky's to seem deviant. More importantly, it takes a hell of a lot more than cheesy Hedwig B-sides to make me want to ever listen to your record again. (MS) Crustacean Records, PO Box 829 Madison, WI 53071 [www.crustaceanrecords.com](http://www.crustaceanrecords.com)

### Monorail, the/People Chasing People – Visit Pell Mell, CDEP

So many press releases aim for the stars. And when the one accompanying this split release proclaimed *Visit Pell Mell* not only to be "100% urgent" but also home to "the most gripping song cycles to hit the indie scene in years," I got butterflies in my tummy. Unfortunately, when it became clear that both of these bands dedicate themselves to the whiny, mid-tempo vagueness that gives indie rock a bad name, these butterflies flew to the East Coast to find whichever band member's girlfriend had the marketing degree and convince her to step away from her laptop. Me? I just felt bad for the guys. Essentially the same band, the Monorail and People Chasing People do have some decent things going for them. With "Day Lilies," the Monorail proves adept at blowing the speakers out on a big Urge Overkill riff, while People Chasing People's "Two Pianos" borrows a two-step chug from Pedro the Lion. (TS) Milquetoast Records, [www.milquetoastrecords.com](http://www.milquetoastrecords.com)

### Necro – The Sexorcist, CD

Necro is the type of rapper that middle-aged women

freak out about (in a bad way). That being said, Necro is a genius. Yes, this album is chock full of vile, disgusting, explicit, and violent sex rhymes, but Necro has incredible flow and a great sense of humor. It takes a darker sense of humor to appreciate his style, as it's definitely not for everybody. (It takes him a whole nine seconds to refer to a woman as a bitch, and the 18th track is called "I Remain Stiff"), but the guy is amazing at what he does. If you thought Kool Keith's Sex Style was a little too tame for your tastes, push the envelope and check out *The Sexorcist*. (DH) Psycho-Logical, [www.psychologicalrecords.com](http://www.psychologicalrecords.com)

#### No Heroes – We Ain't No Heroes, 7"

We Ain't No Heroes brings back memories of being a young punk in the '80s. No Heroes sound like the band that both the punks and skins would go see and mosh together in one big violent pit. Fast-paced punk with an overuse of the crash cymbal creates a distinct sound that brings back the days of demo tapes and safety pins. We should applaud the 45 RPM record and its use of six short songs crashing down. When was the last time that you saw a record sleeve that read both, "This record was brought to you by capitalism" and "If you steal this record, you're not punk; you're just a thief. Fuck You." Kids these days don't have enough pissed off punk with vocals that you can hear and have fun with. Of course, the lyrics are cliché, but isn't that what made the golden era of Thrasher magazine so much fun in the first place? With the popularity of skate rock coming back, we can assume more bands like No Heroes will be coming out of the woodwork. If they all sound as excellent and genuine as this disc, then I say bring them on. (EA)

Blind Spot Records, PO Box 697, 3534 SE 52nd Ave, Portland, OR 97206, [www.noherostheband.com](http://www.noherostheband.com)

#### No More Fear – A Matter of Choice, CD

I reviewed a No More Fear 7" awhile back and remember not really digging it. I don't know what they did differently, but *A Matter of Choice* is an all out rocker. Gang choruses, thick production, and yelled but sung vocals are all here! All the best parts of melodic straightedge hardcore are present in tasteful amounts. The promo sheet mentions Ignite, and I would definitely agree with that. I can also hear pieces of Chain of Strength. Musically, they keep the pace moving fast, but slow it down at the right times. The lyrics are well written, even if they aren't really addressing any new topics. It's not often that a band can pull off writing an entire album of good songs, but No More Fear has done it. This is one of the most consistent and overall great records I've heard in 2006. Keep the hits coming, guys. (DA)

Handprint Records, CP 15319, 00143 Rome, Italy [www.nomore-fear.net](http://www.nomore-fear.net)

#### Old Table – Animal Trilogy, CD

William Table goes to great pains to explain he's from the SUBURBS (his caps) of New York City. While listening to this three-tiered compilation, it's easy to envision the split-level's basement of banished objects in which Table recorded these four-track songs. Borrowing a few cues from Sebadoh's early '90s songbook, Table plays the secret savant on the album's first "movement," "Mental Horse." After an introduction featuring a frog-based fable seem-

ingly stolen from a children's record, "'It Made Me a Believer' (Actual Quote)" offers a peppy turn of shambling, Art Brut-style hooks and observations. It's downhill from there. Part two, "The Bear," features the afterbirth of Table's "I'm listening to Captain Beefheart" phase. Part three, "Spiteful Crow," finds a middle ground between the first two movements while adding a fuller sound on "Pythagoras" and the TrumansWater-sounding "Late July's Alien Blood." At best, *Animal Trilogy* chronicles the decline of a suburban music fan's ambition—a parable for the turning 25 set. (TS)  
Self-released, [oldtable@gmail.com](mailto:oldtable@gmail.com).

#### Oneida/Plastic Crimewave Sound – Split, 12"

Let me just say that this split is a must-have for only for the Plastic Crimewave Sound's track, the B-side's gargantuan "End of Cloud." This motorik-driven aural ambush is the kind of thing I wish more bands were capable of, channeling their influences into something new and exciting. Through it all, tones change shape, subtle harmonies rise to the fore and freak the fuck out before subsiding once again, and, over the top, you hear the ghostly echoes of Cat Chow and Plastic Crimewave's rambling vocals. Every sound is cohesive yet disparate, straying at times and falling back in line to issue the deadliest of mind daggers to the listener. "End of Cloud" is as good a reason as any to indulge in smokeable drugs. The Oneida side benefits from gorgeous production quality, but as the saying goes: you can't polish a turd. Nothing happening here from the once-great New York supergroup. Whatever you have to pay for this record is more than worth it, though, thanks to hometown heroes Plastic Crimewave Sound. Check them out at once. (JJG)

JagJaguwar, 1499 West 2nd Street, Bloomington, IN 47403, [www.jagjaguwar.com](http://www.jagjaguwar.com)

#### POS – Audition

Hip hop has flirted with punk rock throughout its history—Public Enemy's bombast, independent hip-hop labels adopting "fuck majors" defiance—and, in doing so, has called some punk rockers over to its corner. POS, out of Minneapolis, represents as a kid who takes whichever parts he likes from both, and combines them into his own thing, having it both ways with early-'90s high-vocab fast rap juxtaposed with thrashing and screaming. Probably the first hip-hop album to reference the Soviettes and Dillinger Escape Plan, *Audition* sounds like a rap record trying to sound like a rock record that's trying to sound like a rap record—lots of booming drums, guitar samples, and gang backups. While some MCs sound like they're speaking directly into the listener's ear, POS sounds like he's in front of a crowd for the duration of *Audition*—not an arena crowd, but a just-big-enough, packed and sweating crowd. Sometimes he also sounds vocally a little too much like Rhymesayers labelmates Brother Ali and Slug (Slug guesting on two songs doesn't help there). Craig Finn from the Hold Steady contributes a shadowy verse and the chorus to "Safety in Speed (Heavy Metal)," while "Paul Kersey to Jack Kimball" drops a clever bit of resigned wordplay: "We don't throw our hands up like we don't care anymore / we throw our hands up like

we don't care anymore." (AB)

Rhymesayers Entertainment, 2049 Hennepin Ave. S., Minneapolis MN 55405 [www.rhymesayers.com](http://www.rhymesayers.com)

#### Phelan, Patrick – Cost, CD

Patrick Phelan's third album, *Cost*, is a refreshingly thoughtful, richly layered album of dreamy, psychedelic pop. I hesitate to ghettoize these sounds into a downtrodden genre like shoegaze, but fans of that sound will surely enjoy Phelan's work here. Opener "Favor" is a compressed, condensed exercise in pattern and delay, while the rest of the first half of the album generally finds Phelan building mountains of sound around his sparse acoustic fingering. *Cost* does have its flaws—two economy-sized sketches break up the album halfway through, followed by a slew of weaker tunes. "Settlement" sounds like Built to Spill-lite, or a somewhat more fleshed out version of the Brokeback Mountain theme, and "Through the Bedroom Walls," for all its effort, never seems to hit its intended mark. My guess is, you'll be asleep or half-baked by the closer, "Fall," but stay up for it, as this is *Cost*'s true gem. (JJC)

JagJaguwar, 1499 West 2nd Street, Bloomington, IN 47403, [www.jagjaguwar.com](http://www.jagjaguwar.com)

#### Prefuse 73 – Security Screenings, CD

Prefuse 73 has returned with another full-length that, no offense to him, I prayed was going to be better than his last one, *Surrounded by Silence*. This new album emphasizes the instrumental content more than his last release, which featured vocal samples from guests like Aesop Rock, Ghostface, and El-P. *Security Screenings* only features two guests: Four Tet and Babatunde Adegbimpe from TV on the Radio. I expected good things from his song "Creating Cyclical Headaches" with Four Tet, but in reality, it does just that—creates a headache. Obnoxious, noisy, and virtually unlistenable, this track is one to skip. The rest of the album is very typical of Prefuse 73: cut-up samples of vocals, keyboards, bass guitars and horns layered together with a lot of low end. If you are not familiar with Prefuse, go out and buy *One Word Extinguisher*, one of my favorite records, and easily Prefuse's best. *Security Screenings* just does not compare. Could he have hit a rut after recording *One Word Extinguisher*? Nothing that he has put out since then has blown my mind, or even come close to competing with his tremendous 2003 release.. I still believe that Scott Herren has it in him to release another astonishing record, it's just a question of when. (MB)

Warp Records, PO Box 25378, London, NW5 1GL, UK. [www.warprecords.com](http://www.warprecords.com)

#### Quasi – When the Going Gets Dark, CD

Quasi never cease to amaze me with their loud (almost orchestral) Built to Spill kind of vibrancy, and there are only two folks behind the music. Even with its seemingly pessimistic title, this record is ultimately an optimistic ode with a theme of innocence, of searching for something better, floating throughout. There are moments of pure joy leaping out of dissonant jams, making sense of chaos ("The Rhino"). The title track is an indictment of the "real world"—asking "what is real?" amid all of the mediated images and false wars being declared. "Death Culture Blues," which laments our homogenized obsessions, stands out with a soulful twang that sounds like it should be

the soundtrack for an Adam West-esque superhero show. You can always trust Quasi to approach our grey days with quick bursts of light, letting us see what was once muddled in overcast skies. (AA)

Touch & Go, PO Box 25520, Chicago, IL 60625, [touchandgore-cards.com](http://touchandgore-cards.com)

#### Quinton & Miss PussyCat – Swamp Tech, CD

On "Fly Like a Rat," Miss PussyCat implores us to explore the "rhythm of rabies," as Quinton's pulsating organ and four-on-the-floor beat ramble behind. For folks who can't quite shake their asses in public to gay bar diva tunes or revisionist Talking Heads retreats, this is good times. Rabies, folks! Why not dance to it? Thankfully, *Swamp Tech* features more of the same. Although less percussion-oriented than past efforts, which have showcased Quinton's various homemade rhythmic devices, the disc again complements the New Orleans duo's party attitude with requisite randomness and sass. "Witch in the Club" is an old-school Quinton hoedown, with a carnival-organ bounce and his carnival-barker swagger. "French Quarter Faggot" takes on metrosexuals, while his "God of Thunder" actually finds merit in the words of its original performer, Kiss. Elsewhere, Miss PussyCat—with help from the puppets she uses to make sense of cryptic missives such as "Squirrel Garden" during the band's live set—counters with a wail that's halfway between Edith Massey and Carol Channing. Nice. (TS)

Tigerbeat6 Records, [www.tigerbeat6.com](http://www.tigerbeat6.com)

#### Racebannon – The Inevitable, CD

Just last issue, when I reviewed the reissue of Racebannon's first album, I made mention that I hoped they would do a singles collection, and it seems I got my wish (and then some). This is a double CD that collects every 7", split, and compilation appearance of the band's extremely prolific career so far (they have put out more splits and 7-inches than I can keep track of). This collection contains 29 songs, which range from their first demo tracks to their early singles (when they had two singers and were far less demented and more thrash sounding), to some much more current and avant-garde post hardcore dementia that they've become known for. I always speculated that Racebannon found whatever it was the early Butthole Surfers were ingesting that made them so unique and twisted and description defying, but instead of swallowing it, they freebased it! While I'm a huge Racebannon fan, two discs of them is a lot to stomach in one sitting, but broken up into smaller listens, there is some really prime material here, and it is nice to have it all in one handy place. The stuff was remastered and sounds as good, if not better, than ever. Highly recommended for those who like a challenging listen, or just want to piss off anyone within earshot. (MXV)

Alone Records, PO Box 3019, Oswego, NY 13126, [www.alonerecords.com](http://www.alonerecords.com)

#### Radio Jetstream – Angelicidistro, CD

Painfully honest in his vivid descriptions of the trials and tribulations of the coming-of-age, Patrick Jonas Hickey strings together nine heartfelt acoustic songs on his debut LP, and, in so doing, establishes himself a critical new voice in the singer/songwriter field. Hickey's simple, yet robust melodies, which rely on

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

the shadow of Integrity somehow still abides, casting a high-water mark of creativity that very few of their modern contemporaries even recognize.

**Now you take this home, throw it in a pot; add some broth, a potato. Baby, you've got a stew going:** Darkthrone, Too Old Too Cold; Ghostface Killah, *The Pretty Toney Album*; Il Balletto Di Bronzo, Ys; Kayo Dot, Dowsing Anemone With Copper Tongue; Neanderthal, Fighting Music.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Ryan Leach (RL)

Gene Clark, *Gene Clark with the Gosdin Brothers*. Right out the gate you should know that Gene Clark's debut is one of the greatest albums ever made. The proverbial tormented genius, Gene left his money cow, the Byrds, in '66, starting over with this record on Columbia. Released the same week as his former groups' *Younger Than Yesterday* album, Gene's debut tanked (the marketing push being emphasized on the Byrds' record). Too bad the marketing men at Columbia and/or the record-buying public didn't catch onto this record, as he gave the Byrds an artistic run for its money. Gene's debut is stark; it's morose, it's warm, it's fucked... it's a Gene Clark record. Gene pioneered the blending of folk, country, and bluegrass with rock, most of which you'll find here. In addition, Gene was a nearly unparalleled songwriter, graced with a warm baritone that's as distinct as Johnny Cash's. Gene wrote in a semi-surreal manner, covering issues like relationships ("So You Say You Lost Your Baby") and drugs ("Elevator Operator") on his debut and all future releases. Unlike Lou Reed, Gene didn't innovate in terms of lyrical subject matter; what made Gene great was his effortless chord progressions, that warm-as-bread-out-of-the-fucking-oven voice, musical—again, not lyrical—innovations, and a tactile, overt feeling of depression and soul that lines every track on this record. This is the kind of stuff that made Van Morrison a legend on *Astral Weeks*. Gene does it here too, only not anymore: Gene's been dead for 15 years now.

**World War I: Read about it at your library:** Gene Clark, motherfucker; the Byrds, *The Notorious Byrd Brothers*; Hannibal, *Hannibalism*; the Starvations, *Get Well Soon*; Celine, *Death on the Installment Plan*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Justin Marciak (JM)

Gorky's Zygotic Mynci, *Spanish Dance Troupe*. Writing about Gorky's Zygotic Mynci should be easy. Essentially, the band performs lovely ballads and quirky pop-rock songs, but those general descriptions seem as meaningless as "compassionate conservative." On the other hand, does "Welsh psychedelic folk" help any more? Maybe describing a three-track stretch in the middle of Spanish Dance Troupe will help. Layers of finger-picked guitar and shakers drive track eight, instrumental "The Fool." Working off the guitar picking, woodwinds and a piano join with a cascading countermelody, probably an allusion to Welsh folk music. A chime ends the song, fingernails-on-chalkboard strings immediately creep into the mix, the drummer counts, "One, two, three, four," and a choir of vocalists chants, "Hair like monkey / teeth like dog." Track nine, appropriately called "Hair Like Monkey Teeth Like Dog," begins. The nearly dissonant strings whine. A pianist plays a circular theme spooky enough for an episode of *The Twilight Zone*. The drums march. Like drunken pub patrons holding an atonal sing-along, a room of vocalists chants the song title. The volume and tempo increases until the accompaniment abruptly ceases and one vocalist grunts like an ape. Then, track 10, the title track, begins with a country-rock beat, fiddle, and strummed acoustic guitar. Frontman Euros Childs sings a conventional pop song about wacky adventures in a "dance troupe from Spain." That three-song segment of the album is probably the wildest. And hey, by comparison, the other 12 tracks are lovely ballads and quirky pop-rock songs.

**Moving to:** Belle and Sebastian, *The Life Pursuit*; Deadboy & the Elephantmen, *We Are Night Sky* (reviewed this issue); Django Reinhardt, *Jazz in Paris: Nuages*; Wire, *Pink Flag*; the Breeders, *Last Splash*.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Steve Mizek (SRM)

Melvins, *Houdini*. The reason that *Houdini* is often thought of as the Melvin's crowning achievement is simple: it kicks ass from head to tail. With Atlantic now paying the tab for recording, King Buzzo and his kooky compatriots were able to give their already mammoth aesthetic the behemoth thickness it deserved. The riffs roar from speakers, ready to kick down doors and demand as much booze and drugs as the listener has. *Houdini* opens with the snarling "Hooch," then revs its engine on "Night Goat." After bowing deeply to Sabbath's "Planet Caravan" with "Lizzy" and venting spleen all grunge-like on "Going Blind," the Melvins throw up the horns and manage to get heavier. "Honey Bucket" and "Hag Me" crush like dinosaurs fucking up a traffic jam. After indulging their woozy punk weirdness, the colossal guitar lines return to make sure no bones were left unbroken. Buzzo and Co. also flex their experimental muscles on the click-kaboom "Pearl Bomb" and epic stomp piece "Spread Eagle Beagle." Brilliant and bludgeoning, *Houdini* is rightly regarded as part of the holy trinity of early '90s stoner metal records (with Earth 2 and Sleep's *Holy Mountain* rounding things out).

**Five records I've been into lately:** Chrome, *Half Machine Lips Move*; Big Daddy Kane, *Long Live the Kane*; Demon Fuzz, *Afreaka*; This Heat, *Deceit*; Sun City Girls, *Torch of the Mystics*.

### Reviewer spotlight: Sean Moeller (SM)

Of Montreal, *Cherry Peel*. First, you'll get the bad news. During the twilight days of my college years, at the crappy, drafty house with a pink flamingo mailbox out front that I lived in with seven friends, we threw one of the last all-comers parties in the basement of that crib. It wasn't much of a basement, but a poster of former Chicago Cub Damon Buford hung conspicuously from the TV-room wall for much longer than it should have and my room was

his decisive strumming of the acoustic guitar, serve as the perfect backing to his illustrative lyrics. Many of the songs also include additional instrumentation from piano, organ and cello. Everything is then seamlessly brought together by Hickey's loud, clear vocals and confident delivery. Importantly, Hickey sets himself apart from lesser acoustic performers by boldly infusing his sound with a wide range of influences, from new wave to post-punk. This seemingly unrelated chain of inspiration leads to a sound both original and daring, an impressive feat for a newcomer to such a bare musical genre. "Forget This Holiday" and "Just You and Me" are the two essential tracks that showcase Hickey at his unpretentious best and hint at good things to come. This could well be one of the most important debuts of the year. (BN) [www.radiojetstream.com](http://www.radiojetstream.com)

the band has returned, after all this time, with an album this good. Ringworm seem to work at a glacial pace, and *Justice Replaced by Revenge* has the patina of an album honed to perfection over a great deal of time, with a staggering attention to detail. Like a classic muscle car lovingly kept, Ringworm's precision is a joy to behold; light speed riffs shift down into perfect breakdowns and back again like a well-oiled machine. Halfway through the album, the instrumental "Whiskey Drunk" provides a useful analogy—Ringworm: just like a fine single malt. (CL) [Victory Records, www.victoryrecords.com](http://VictoryRecords.com)

### Stnng - Dignified Sissy, CD

The aptly named frontman Chris Besinger unfurls the DC punk narrative bark that serves as the backbone of *Dignified Sissy*, but each member of the tightly wound Twin Cities quintet seems more than willing to contribute to their debut full-length's venomous bite. Over the course of 14 too-short songs, the group doesn't perform a two-guitar, 100-proof brand of angular punk as much as it unleashes it. Distorted, but carefully mapped, guitar lines slash and stab at listeners' ears, weaving around each other before they crash into a pummeling wall of percussion or Besinger roars into the spotlight. "How to Avoid an Assassination" may prove these guys own well-worn copies of *In on the Kill Taker* while standout tracks like "My Golden Oldie," which begins and ends with the same rusted-razor-on-chalkboard guitar squalor, feel downright violent. And, in one of the group's more pointed and political moments, who's not going to scream along when Besinger greets a mounting crescendo by screaming, "We've got a new national anthem / Aren't you glad to be in America? / We're all fucking crazy!" (JV) [Modern Radio Record Label, PO Box 8886, Minneapolis, MN 55408, www.modern-radio.com](http://ModernRadioRecordLabel.com)

### Returnables, the – S/T, CDEP

Music has always been there for you. You've lain beside your speakers and found solace in someone else's pain to accompany your own misery, letting the play button do all the work. Music has done a lot for you. Now, it's time for you return the favor with a small gesture by purchasing this CD, where all proceeds will be donated to the John Glick Memorial Fund. Last summer, guitarist and vocalist Glick (AKA Bobby James Lee Ray), Michael Dahlquist (of Silkworm) and Doug Meis (from the Dials) were killed in a senseless auto collision. This release marks the last songs from the Chicago band with four studio tracks and three live cuts featuring their own brand of power pop with influences like the Undertones and the Replacements. Glick's understated angst and thoughtful lyrics effortlessly seeps into your brain with each listen. On the live tracks (recorded a month before the untimely passings), you can hear cheering and the clink of bottles amidst the blaring music. Let's toast one more for this one. (AA) [Dirtnap Records, 2615 SE Clinton St., Portland, OR 97202, dirtnaprecords.com](http://DirtnapRecords.com)

### Ringworm – Justice Replaced By Revenge, CD

It's too bad that Victory interns are probably too busy stuffing Hawthorne Heights press packs for reps at Best Buy to adequately promote what's probably the best album the label has released in several years (and an album that was topping my "best of 2005" list months before this review copy finally landed on my doorstep). The problem with this picture is that *Justice Replaced by Revenge* is exactly the album that bands today should be listening to as a metalcore Cliff Notes. Then again, I'm a little surprised myself that

### Set to Explode – S/T, CDEP

Set to Explode contains members of Striking Distance, Worn Thin, and 86 Mentality, among others. But does it stand up to those bands? Undoubtedly. This band of DC hardcore veterans has assembled a debut EP of classic proportions. This is what hardcore is supposed to be: no frills, no metal, no bullshit. The pace may slow down in places, but the intensity is unrelenting. Seriously, if you have any interest in hardcore then I can't see how you wouldn't like this EP. The production isn't too slick, but the songs are solid, both musically and vocally. Dave Byrd's lyrics are better than most. Do you really need more reasons as to why you need this album? If any of the guys who started hardcore as a genre actually still listened to it, they would be made proud by this EP. So when's the full-length coming out? I want more. (DA) [Grave Mistake, www.gravemistakerecords.com](http://GraveMistake.com)

### Silentist – Chariot Swing, CDEP

Despite sporting an impossible-to-decipher logo, Silentist delivers some truly unique goods on what could be defined as something of a percussionist's wet dream. That is, however, keeping in mind that the piano is a percussive instrument. When I heard *Chariot Swing*'s two-minute opening of floor-tommy and shifting beats underneath discordant, off-kilter piano, I wasn't sure what to make of it—especially since much of it was a touch sloppy. After haunting

vocals came in, accompanying a slightly longer and similar track of drums and piano, I thought that perhaps things were building. Indeed, they were: each of the subsequent tunes affixed additional length and instrumentation, with the third of the five songs substantiating this one-man band's arrangement capabilities. It's a beautiful construction, and I just wish that equal time had been put into the disc's first two tracks to tighten them up a bit. It's as if the EP is in chronological order (and who knows, maybe it is). But judging by the samples from Silentist's other EP on Celestial Gang, fantastic creations may be in store for future releases. Definitely recommended. (SJM) *Celestial Gang*, [www.celestialgang.com](http://www.celestialgang.com), [www.myspace.com/collectiverocks](http://www.myspace.com/collectiverocks)

#### **So I Had to Shoot Him – Alpha Males and Popular Girls, CD**

From the ashes of what used to be a grind band comes So I Had to Shoot Him, a band with so many peculiar facets it's nearly surreal. On top of technical metalcore chug-a-lug sits a gothic Valkyrie calling herself Contessa Von Bismarck. Instead of just screaming along, she prefers to sing strange melodies that hardly relate to pounding planned chaos around her. To up the ante, she sings in an operatic style not unlike King Diamond. So while the rest of the band does its best Dillinger Escape Plan impression, Contessa belts out her lines like she should be singing for Krautrock legends Amon Düül II. It's an eccentric sandwich of sound, to say the least, which might be more compelling in concept than on record. But if you're one for strange pairings of bands and vocalists, give the band's debut, *Alpha Males and Popular Girls*, a try. (SRM) Crucial Blast, PO Box 364, Hagerstown, Maryland 21741-0364. [www.crucialblast.net](http://www.crucialblast.net)

#### **Sparrows – Swarm and Sing, LP**

Sparrows is a talented group of musicians, one that would be much more remarkable if they weren't such copycats. The epic-scale post-rock that Sparrows make is moody and thoughtful, thriving on languid guitar moans stretched and enlarged to looming proportions. The string section—which acts as the guitars' foil—rave up and rain down like a hail of arrows. *Swarm and Sing* features three compositions, two of which start with samples of incomprehensible old men rambling, and the last ends with muddled playground noises. Does any of this sound familiar? It feels like Godspeed You! Black Emperor made this same record five years ago, from the samples to the arrangements. If you've never heard Godspeed or can't get enough of their brooding sound, *Swarm and Sing* might do good things for you. At the same time, Sparrows are too late to try and claim this kind of music as truly their own. (SRM) Gatehouse Anchor, 8 Cornstalk Rd. Dracut, MA 01826. [www.gatehouseanchor.com](http://www.gatehouseanchor.com)

#### **Step On It! – Speak For Yourself, CDEP**

Here's some fast and brutal hardcore. Wait, what's that I hear? Is it a sense of humor? Is that possible in modern hardcore? You heard it here folks, there's a hardcore band that isn't afraid to crack a joke, and their name is Step On It!. This is fast enough that it could be considered power-violence if it had blast beats. There are plenty of breakdowns to keep it from becoming a total thrash-

fest. Step On It do a good job of combining fast and slow parts without overdoing it on either end, and the slightly rough production suits their sound. This is one of the best hardcore releases I've heard in awhile. Do yourself a favor and pick up *Speak For Yourself*: you'll thank me later. The CD bonus track, "Dub On It", is worth the price alone. There's something brewing in St. Louis... listen up. (DA) Collective Records, [www.collectiverocks.com](http://www.collectiverocks.com)

#### **Subtract by Two – Agoniser Ecrire, CD**

Subtract by Two are James W. Hill and Kyle Bobby Dunn, two guys with a supporting cast, for this, their first recording for new label This Generation Tapes. The album, *Agoniser Ecrire*, is something of a challenge—a true sound collage with every possible heady pretension heaped upon it by its creators, one that dares you to take it seriously. The philosophical connections between track titles like "Existentialism" are vague at best, but what Subtract by Two does, sonically, on this album, is more important than what names are given to periods of time on the disc. Disregard those and set your perception free: hear guitars recorded miles away from the microphone, lurching, crunching static in the foreground, hear funeral suite strings and ghastly piano melody framed in a netherworld of Arvo Part nightmares. Whatever you do, allow this music to grab you by the shirt collars, to take your attention, as there's little resistance once it does. (JJC) *This Generation Tapes*, [www.thisgenerationtapes.com](http://www.thisgenerationtapes.com)

#### **Takaru/A Light in the Attic – Split, LP**

I found this in the Punk Planet office and wasn't sure if it had been reviewed before, but I really like Takaru so I took it home. On the inner sleeve, it says: "985/985. This is the absolute last record to be hand packaged by me. Joshua." Also, it has a date of 7/4/2003. Hmm... well, this record is awesome. Both bands on this split play urgent, chaotic hardcore. Takaru have since broken up, and I'm not sure about *A Light in the Attic*, but this record is still worth seeking out if you need something angry and of high quality. (DH)

*Sky of Ill Rule*, PO Box 710516, San Francisco, CA 94117, [takaru.riseup.net](http://takaru.riseup.net)

#### **Tarantella – Esqueletos, CD**

You enter an uncrowded bar somewhere in Santiago late at night and wait for the guy who's got the info. on vigilante groups in Colombia. It's the kind of place where someone easily could get stabbed, but this band on the stage would just keep on playing while the victim falls to the floor. Tarantella is a Latin alt-country outfit with a sultry-voiced lead singer, Kal Cahoon, who conveys a Mazzy Star-like mystery to this noir Americana. Most of the songs are sung in Spanish and have mariachi and spaghetti-western guitars, as well as touches of violin or accordion. The beautiful "Mexican Wine" softly swoons with banjo and violin. If Calexico is Cal/Mex, this band finds their muse deeper south. Though the references are from south of the border, the band is actually from Denver and features many members of labelmates Slim Cessna's Auto Club. Perhaps for this reason, the drums and guitars retain rock-edged sounds when they want, resulting in a refreshingly unique blend of genres. (BA)

*Alternative Tentacles Records*, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141, [www.alternativetentacles.com](http://www.alternativetentacles.com)

## RERUNS REISSUES FROM PUNK'S PAST

#### **Corm – Audio Flame Kit, CD**

Thank the high heavens for Polyvinyl, which—in an extreme display of good taste—has reissued this one and only album from DC five-piece Corm. With unpredictable time changes, churning guitars, quick drums and dejected shouts, this band crafted an album truly rough and impressively authentic. Joining together in 1990, the group lasted for seven years, but only released one proper album, *Audio Flame Kit*, which was released as a collaboration between the band's own label Shute and Dischord Records. For the majority of their time together, the band was in high school—notable solely because you wouldn't expect to find a sound this distinguished amid lockers and cafeteria lunches. Urgent vocals, angular guitars, and choppy lyric fragments are what Corm hurl forth best, making them one of the best, but least-known, post-hardcore emo predecessors. The instrumental tracks at the beginning, middle, and end of the album punctuate time with thoughtful guitar melodies that show off the diverse sound Corm was capable of, with "Then I Built My Own Violin" as a particular standout. "Gospel CharLOTS" is fantastic, hurling forth bundled angst, followed shortly by "Call Me Ishmael," which spews forth more brilliant fragments: "Surrogate steel strings / rubber nipple / generations." Aside from a compilation of 7-inches and previously unreleased tracks, *Audio Flame Kit* is the only full-length effort to come from the band. Now a decade old, it still sounds energetic and fresh, and surely had an influence on many groups to emerge since (Cap'n Jazz comes to mind). While it is unfortunate that the group managed to produce only this album, it remains an impressive way to start and end a career. (SJM)

*Polyvinyl Record Co.*, PO Box 7140 Champaign, IL, 61826-7140, [www.polyvinylrecords.com](http://www.polyvinylrecords.com)

#### **Killdozer – The Last Waltz, CD**

This here is the final concert by early sludgecore cult heroes Killdozer, recorded on November 16, 1996 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I'd always hear about these dudes from older punk/indie-head buddies whenever I'd mention the Melvins—"Dude, are you into the 'Dozer?"—but I'd never actually heard their music until now. Man, was I missing some killer stuff! The comparisons to late '80s-era Melvins is somewhat appropriate, although Killdozer exhibits way less of an overt Black Sabbath influence. You can clearly hear the affect their noisy, untamed grooves had on later bands like Unsane and Fudge Tunnel. Standout tracks include the obtusely funky "Man of Meat," and a slow-rolling, tortured, seven minute dirge called "I've Seen Grown Men Cry." They top it all off with an intense, mostly-sincere version of the Lynyrd Skynyrd anthem "Sweet Home Alabama." All my sludge buddies out there had better check this out. (AJ)

*Crustacean Records*, PO Box 829, Madison, WI 53701-0829, [www.crustaceanrecords.com](http://www.crustaceanrecords.com)

#### **Rezillos – Can't Stand the Rezillos, CD**

The Rezillos are Scotland's best known punk band and released *Can't Stand the Rezillos* in 1978 at the turning point when punk was becoming new wave. Eugene Reynolds and Jo Callis formed the band with

several Edinburgh Art College peers in 1975. They went through the normal challenges that all bands start with, and by 1976 played their first show. In the next two years, some excellent singles were released. Both *I Can't Stand My Baby* and *(My Baby) Does Good Sculptures* are well worth the money and time to hunt down. The cat-and-mouse play of Eugene's vocals and the wonderful female lead vocals of Fay Fife make the distinctive sound that would later be popularized by another post new wave act, the B-52's. After months of delays their 13-track masterpiece *Can't Stand the Rezillos* was released. It takes a special band like the Rezillos to blend songs about alien invasions, the cold war, Thunderbirds, and a pair of great covers on one record. J Mascis of Dinosaur Jr. fame once said that the bass playing of William Mysterious on this record is the "hottest bass playing ever." Touring under the Ramones and over the Undertones created a strain on the band, and after a few more singles and a live LP, the Rezillos called it quits. Modern bands such as the Epoxies are often said to sound like the Rezillos, but in reality, no one sounds like them. They are not a synth-driven band like many believe, but rather a powerful rock and pop band that used horns and a killer rhythm section to keep the kids dancing all night long. After breaking up, Fife and Reynolds formed the Revillos, Callis formed Shake, and both released several records worth finding. Finally, Callis was part of the Human League and co-wrote "Don't You Want Me." This re-release is one of a few versions that is available, and has no bonus tracks. Warner Brothers released a version that comes with a single and almost the complete live album, but the sound is not as hot in that version and the live tracks weigh down the classic record. Listening to this in its original thirteen track format is the way to go, and DBK has independently done a great job with the packaging and sound. (EA)

*DBK Records*, [www.rezillos.com](http://www.rezillos.com)

#### **Sofahead – Pre Marital Predicament, CD**

I'll be the first to admit that I have no point of reference for "underground melodic UK punk," which may have hindered my enjoyment of this record, a re-mastered version of Sofahead's first two records (*Pre Marital Yodeling* and *What a Predicament*) together on one disc. If you are inclined toward base, socio-political, unrefined punk rock from two decades ago, you might enjoy this. (AA)

*Boss Tuneage*, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG192WB, UK. [www.bosstuneage.com](http://www.bosstuneage.com)

#### **Trouble, the – Nobody Laughs Anymore, CD**

The Trouble lasted from 1995 through 1999, and *Nobody Laughs Anymore*, put out by GMM Records, was the band's first LP. Long out of print, it is now being re-issued by Bridge 9 for a new generation of hardcore fans. Combining the staples of a good hardcore sound, namely the rapid guitars and a pounding rhythm section, with a blue-collar street punk attitude, the Trouble created crude (though melodic) songs. Worth a listen. (BN)

*Bridge 9 Records*, PO Box 990052, Boston, MA 02199, [www.bridge9.com](http://www.bridge9.com)

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

down there. Two stupid drunk chicks went into my room and bumped into a stack of CD on the top of a bookcase, causing them to crash to the hard floor. My copy of "Cherry Peel" was in that stack and it popped out of its jewel case, cracking in half. Of all the records these sloppy bitches could have broken, why couldn't they have taken down Bush's Sixteen Stone or something I wouldn't have missed? I bought another, but it wasn't the same. You see, there are two versions of Kevin Barnes' first album: one that is spare and pure and one that is layered with some unnecessary whipped cream (keyboards and vocals). Buyer beware. This album is a delightful way of looking at the finally appreciated Barnes' baby pictures. This is him with crayons and scratch paper, formulating the tracings what would eventually go on to create the unspeakable wonders of *The Sunlandic Twins*.

**Current occupations:** Someone Still Loves You Boris Yeltsin, Broorr, Sound Team, Work EP; Two Gallants, What the Toll Tells; Arctic Monkeys, Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not; Catfish Haven, Please Come Back; Built to Spill, You in Reverse.



### Reviewer Spotlight – Sarah Moody (SBM)

Cat Power, *Myra Lee*. "I believe I am the luckiest person alive," Chan Marshall (AKA Cat Power) deadpans on "We All Die," as she hurls forth lurching blues and thick drums to stomp through. Named after her mother, *Myra Lee* is the second release in the Cat Power canon and encapsulates the volatility she displayed early in her career. Her vocals blast forth on the standout "Rocket" in a way that I've never heard since, and "Ice Water" alone should be given an award or encased in metal, in part for the line "I could take one thousand showers / and never be clean," as well as the full, plaintive way in which Marshall presents herself. But here's the thing about this record: it's angry. And I don't mean angry in that early-'90s riot grrrl women's lib type of way; no, this is you-done-me-wrong and my mind is ruined for it, tortured because of it, straight down to the core. It is abrasive in its honesty and bold in approach; Marshall's voice is otherworldly throughout, whether shouting or merely relaying admissions. This is most apparent on "Not What You Want," which sounds like it was recorded at four in the morning in a bathroom post-breakdown, all shouts and raw emotion. Marshall collapses every sinew into this torrid exorcism, making *Myra Lee* one that continues to amaze, rustle up from the inside out, and remind me constantly of how I should feel—a full ten years after it was first released. That is an accomplishment.

**Spiraling:** Band of Horses, *Everything All the Time*; Edith Piaf, *Live at Carnegie Hall*; Pissed Jeans, *Shallow*; Tunng, *Mother's Daughter and Other Songs* (reviewed this issue); Jaylib, *Champion Sound* (RIP J Dilla).

### Reviewer Spotlight: Scott J Morrow (SJM)

Nine Inch Nails, *The Fragile*. From Pretty Hate Machine to *The Fragile*, the quality of Trent Reznor's work with Nine Inch Nails increased exponentially. *Broken* did away with the platitudeous '80s sounds and ushered in the industrial '90s; *The Downward Spiral* amplified that sound just two years later with expanded instrumentation, enlarged experimentation, and repeating melodic themes; *The Fragile* followed the next logical progression of what songs like "The Perfect Drug" foreshadowed. Be it the on-beat drums over a beautiful, repetitive, 3/4 piano line in "La Mer," or the slow-building tension of strings and rumblings behind harmonized vocals in "The Great Below," *The Fragile* gave continued corroboration of Reznor's ability to experiment in a pop context. Much like the piano that ends "Close" on *The Downward Spiral*, Reznor tucked away recurring themes throughout the two-disc release, emphasizing the belief that albums are works unto themselves and not merely a collection of works. Releasing "Starfuckers, Inc." as a single played down the fact that *The Fragile* was considerably more than loud guitars and screams, but the super-scaling piano solo in "Just Like You Imagined" gives proof to the contrary. I won't pretend that 2005's *With Teeth* wasn't a letdown of near-epic proportions, but the two discs of this release more than make up for it.

**And the sea will come to kiss me:** Kaki King, *Legs to Make Us Longer*; Neon Blonde, *Chandeliers in the Savannah*; Cage, *Hell's Winter*; Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, *Of Natural History*; Estradasphere, *Quadropus*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr.) Dana Morse (DM)

Buck 65, *The Vertex*. Believe it or not, Canada has hip hop. On top of that, they have some of the most daring folks out there in hip hop. One of the brightest and smartest is Buck 65. An MC who's so obsessed with finding the right sound and drums to match his tales (that are somewhat snarky) has opted to DJ his own tracks. This is an early solo effort away from Sixtoo of the multidirectional Sebutesones where Buck can keep the tracks more focused. Sure, he's cocky and comes off as a bit of prick right out of the gates with colorful tunes about his penis ("The Centaur"), or how he'll not share his prized beats ("Driftwood"), but he can also take the more personal route and explain how he's not so hard ("On All Fours"). To make sure he can still relate to his audience, he presents a three-part story about baseball as well ("The Blues"). But, besides his storytelling, which is top notch even in his early efforts, his music is layered with so much aside from the beats, the loops, and his scratching. There's so much going on, that may get missed if you don't listen to it with headphones at least once. In the last 10 years, Buck 65 has released concept records, one track 30 minute EP's, live instrumentation, and tunes that would make Tom Waits proud with country tingles all over them. This was the beginning of greatness of an unknown soldier to many.

**What floats my boat:** new Lady Sovereign, new Exit, new Broken Social Scene, not so new Feist, and old B'last.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Moss (BM)

Wynona Riders, *JD Salinger* The first time I happened to set foot in Gilman St., the Wynona Riders happened to be the headlining band. Starry-eyed, pimply, socially awkward, and clinging to my two friends, I wallflowered, treading water

### Tobey, Erin – S/T, CD

This album of hippie/nerd folk, featuring warbly childlike vocals, addresses such subjects as plants and psychology. Unfortunately, there's never any attempt made at some remote sort of refrain or hook; it's all straight guitar and unsure singing with too many self-referencing rhetoricals and nothing to answer or save them. For instance: Tobey as nebula in "Nebula Song": "Would you reach into my nebula / and wave around my cloud / gently stir up my particles?" Tobey as robot in "Robot Song": "Would you want to open me and see all my parts / frozen over on a power-saver mode?" The track "Wedding March" had promise in the more accomplished guitar lines, until more of the same kicked in: "Will I be a bride someday? / How will I approach it? / Will I cry?" You get the idea... Especially given that this is paired with such sparse accompaniment, the imagery is lacking, to say the least. Tobey makes little effort to differentiate her voice or approach throughout these songs, never veering from the same topics and half-handed metaphors, which is why, in the end, you might feel as though you've just listened to the same song twelve times. That being said, Tobey sounds her best when smaller elements are added in to the mix, from distant drums to a guest vocalist, but even then, these compositions turn into little puddles of songs, never achieving anything near cohesive. (SBM)  
Plan-It-X Records, PO Box 3521, Bloomington, IL, 61740, [www.plan-it-x.com](http://www.plan-it-x.com)

### Trainodge—Torch +2, CDEP

Trainodge is a three-piece from Oklahoma that has inherited the start and stop post-rock routine quite well from their Midwestern forbearers. After just minutes of hearing *The Torch EP+2*, it should come as little surprise that Saddle Creek guru AJ Mogis had his hand in recording the band. Like most of the herky-jerky guitar rock on Mr. Mogis's usual projects, Trainodge manages to breathe life into a genre that is routinely bogged down with forgettable efforts. Lead singer Jason Smith still lacks the vocal harmonies needed to run with his contemporaries, however, and his band tends to meander in its attack, allowing the tension to mount but never allowing it to take shape. With a bit more of a cohesive, melodic approach, we might have something here. (MS)  
No Karma Recordings 169 E Montana St. Milwaukee WI 53207  
[www.nokarma.com](http://www.nokarma.com)

### Twin Atlas, the – Sun Township, CD

My my, isn't this a pretty little record! The fifth full-length offering from the Twin Atlas—mainly the project of Sean Byrne, with the help of Lucas Zaleski—is almost too pleasant. Acoustic strumming and gentle, melodic voices are constantly inviting you in, and while it becomes a little lethargic at times, these tunes could be a fitting soundtrack to a quiet night or a slow day. The vocals never quite rise above or below a certain register of sleepy, and the jangly guitars can meander a bit, but that may have been the intention of the duo. "Wrap the Days" kindly sings you off to a daydream amid chirping in the background, and "Come Inside" should be marked as their unofficial theme song. If you're not too demanding of complexities, these hushed and uplifting pastoral tunes certainly make a nice little bubble for you to drift away in. (SBM)  
Tappersize Records, [www.thetwinatlas.com](http://www.thetwinatlas.com)

### Una Corda – Proper Position for Floating (1881), CDEP

Una Corda are an excellent post-rock band from the United Kingdom. The lineup consists of a drummer, two guitarists, and two bassists who create a unique sound, and the band knows how to take advantage of it. The best post-rock bands know how to orchestrate their music like a symphony, and Una Corda are able to create four separate melodic voices like the best classical composers. I'm not saying the harmonies are on par with Mozart's, but for a post-rock band, this is good stuff. On "Three," the chorus effect on the bass brings to mind Disintegration-era Cure. The music is dynamic, and due to the extra low end, the loud parts are heavy to the point of sounding metal. You could call this shoegazer metal, similar to what the Deftones were trying to achieve with their self-titled album, but minus the out-of-tune vocals. This is a really cool EP and shows promise of things to come. (SJ)  
We Used to be the Future Recordings, [www.unacorda.co.uk](http://www.unacorda.co.uk)

### Van Allen Belt – Estrella 7"

Side A of this two song single from Chicago's Van Allen Belt is a low key, math rock type number with angular guitars and spoken word type vocals that switches to a more post-punk type of crescendo. Overall, it doesn't really seem to get you anywhere,

and the abruptness of the end left me unsatisfied. Side B is a little faster number with clangy guitar and a lot of repetition that sounds like the band's experimenting with piecing together a song, but instead of taking the time to flesh it out, just pressed the record and went for it. Since there was very little information on this record, I have no idea who they are or how long they've been at it, but I think a little more time in the practice shed would net some more pleasing results. (MXV)

Post Core Records, [postcore@yahoo.com](mailto:postcore@yahoo.com)

#### **Waterdown – All Riot, CD**

If one thing can be said of the current Victory Records roster, it's that they're certainly covering all the bases in their niche, to the extent that a lot of the bands currently on the books have the appearance of mere tax write-offs. Such is the unfortunate case with Germany's Waterdown. Ostensibly, they have all the characteristics of the next Atreyu or Thursday (ka-ching!), but on their newest album, the band shows a staggering lack of songwriting skills and a dearth of plain old-fashioned good taste. Trotting out a sickly brew of pop-infused metallic screamo, Waterdown occasionally stray into a cringe-worthy Stone Temple Pilots parody, and all too frequently into mall punk that wouldn't sound out of place on the Disney channel. Truly staggering: and for all the wrong reasons. (CL)

Victory Records, [www.victoryrecords.com](http://www.victoryrecords.com)

#### **Wednesdays, the – Invisible Youth, LP**

I'm a little disappointed in myself for not hearing about the Wednesdays until this moment. These guys have a bunch of 7-inches and full-lengths out there, have been playing since they were nine to eleven years of age, and have had two drummers at one time! This ranges from damn catchy garage punk that's burning it up like a train wreck to poppier tunes that retain their crunchy guitar and have a bit of a snakebite. These kids can tear it up, even with the organ that appears on several of the tracks. Invisible Youth has an energy and style that got my blood pumping similar to my first encounter with Rocket From the Crypt years ago. Sure, other bands have a similar style, but few could harness this sound and make it as high energy.. There are bits of rock, R&B, oldies, and classic rock; stuff you can shake your ass to, and then some. These guys seriously impressed me, and I want more. (DM)

Arkam Records, 1925 Hwy. 69 South Savannah, TN 38372

#### **White Rainbow – Zome, CD**

White Rainbow is a lone dude, Adam Forkner, creating lackadaisical, spacey, ambient tracks. The music, much like the pseudonym, conjures an oxymoronic colorless rainbow, something that could be full of vibrant tones and textures but is ultimately disappointing in its various shades of bland. Its droning electronic instrumentation lacks richness, lying flat in one dimension and floating too high and light without any weight. Forkner described Zome as "an audio love letter" to his love, Honey Owens. Perhaps this record should have remained between the two of them, as it may have carried more meaning for both parties, and we wouldn't have to be subjected to hollow tunes of abstract auditory hugs and kisses.

Listening to Zome feels like you're walking to the corner market to pick up some milk: an event that is wholly unexciting and quite ordinary. The kind of experience that's so mundane you would never think to write about it—much less make a record of the incident. (AA)

State Rights Records, 5802 N Kerby, Portland, OR 97212, [statesrightsrecords.com](http://statesrightsrecords.com)

#### **V/A – Anti-Society: Anarcho-Punk Compilation**

##### **Vol. 3, CD**

A good compilation album serves an educational purpose, as opposed to simply providing advertising for the bands it contains. This compilation is the most educational one I've heard in ages. Even those well-versed in the anarcho-punk subgenre will want this release, if only for the whopping 11 previously unreleased tracks it contains. The CD comes with a 24-page booklet that is of almost as much utility as the collection of music. The booklet includes a general essay on the "organized chaos" that was the UK anarcho-punk scene of the '80s. A biography and discography of each of the 23 bands on the comp is likewise included, which is an invaluable resource. The bands range from well-known bands like Icons of Filth, Thatcher on Acid, and Oi Pollio to lesser-known groups like Look Mummy Clowns and Untermensch.

Many of these bands reformed over the years, but the UK anarcho-punk movement of the '80s remains a fascinating bygone era. (AE)

Overground Records, PO Box 1INW, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE99 1 NW, ENGLAND, [overgroundrecords.co.uk](http://overgroundrecords.co.uk)

#### **V/A – Auto Glamour Sound CD**

When it comes to punk rock in Ohio, Cleveland gets all the attention, but over in Cincinnati, they had a blossoming punk scene of their own, all revolving around a collective record label known as Hospital Records. In 1982, Hospital released a double 7" compilation with the same title of this CD, which this is a reissue of, along with lots of extras. While this stuff was all done in the early '80s, some of it sounds like it would have been part of the '70s no wave scene, as it is far more experimental and off-kilter than a lot of punk rock from the same time period. The lineup: Qi-zz ('70s style punk rock), Demental Precox (more like an industrial band than a punk band, and really interesting), 11,000 Switches (sort of jazz inspired lo-fi punk), Teddy and the Frat Girls (the first riot grrrl band?), Spiritual Californians (art-punk), Cointelpro (jazz-laced art-punk) and a few others, with Teddy and the Frat Girls being the only band I'd heard of before. The booklet contains some great liner notes about the bands and the scene at the time. It appears

that the master tapes to some of this stuff must have been lost, as some tracks were mastered off of vinyl, which in some cases wasn't that clean, as there is a fair amount of clicks and crackles. They could have at least attempted to remove some of that stuff, but I guess maybe it makes it feel more authentic, like you're playing the old vinyl. A nice collection of a bunch of very obscure stuff that only the most obsessive of record collectors is probably familiar with. It appears my want list of rare vinyl has just grown by a few more items. (MXV)

Shake It, [www.shakeitrecords.com](http://www.shakeitrecords.com)

#### **V/A – Comomusic Anthology 1990–2005 Volume 2, 2xCD**

Listeners hold double albums to high standards. They debate which tracks could be omitted to squeeze a more perfect album onto one disc. Even though *Comomusic Anthology 1990–2005 Volume 2* intends to document (with authority) the musical landscape of mid-Missouri college town Columbia, it is a two-disc compilation; therefore, it is not exempt from Monday-morning quarterbacking or, in this case, sequencing. The quality of songs varies. No, The C3 Psychoto-Electro Arkestra does not sound like it is playing as one unit in the spacey improvisation "Nobody Sings da Blues."

## **DEMOLITION DERBY CD-R REVIEWS**

#### **100% Lemur Free – S/T, CD**

There's very little 2006 in this British proto-punk quartet, which focuses on grandparental themes: George Orwell's 1984, driving your first car, and Kirov. (TS)

Self-released, [lemurfree@hotmail.com](mailto:lemurfree@hotmail.com)

#### **Black Moss – Gates, CDEP**

Black Moss creates drone music that sounds recorded in a wind tunnel with all associated clamors and rattles within the torrents. Warped vocals, when present, evoke torture scenes. Unlike a lot of drony noise, this isn't so repetitive. There's some warm electronics interspersed that provide some familiar terrain to grasp onto. All of it was manipulated from a performance piece called "Replanting," by Jeremiah Barber. It has hand-crafted packaging in mini-CD format. (BA)

Self-released, [No contact information provided](http://No contact information provided)

#### **Buck Gooter – What da Hell?**

Hilarious bedroom cock-rock blues, if you can believe that. I dug this a lot, and you might, too... if you have a soul. (JJC)

Self-released, [www.buckgooter.tk](http://www.buckgooter.tk)

#### **Cherry Wolf – Who's afraid?, CD-R**

Folkly lo-fi indie rock, which benefits from its grainy production. Reminds me of something in-between early Violent Femmes and a more contemporary Saddle Creek sound. Pretty damn good. (MS)

Self-released, [www.cherrywolf.com](http://www.cherrywolf.com)

#### **Cut the Tension – Demo 2005, CD-R**

This three-song demo from a Memphis hardcore

band is all about male bonding and love for their scene. Like most modern hardcore, Cut the Tension keep a few respectable, if not highly innovative, thrashing riffs in their arsenal. Lyrically, however, it's strictly for the tweens. (AJ)

Keep It Core Records, PO Box 250052, Little Rock, AR 72225, [www.keepitcore.com](http://keepitcore.com)

#### **Killer Squirrels – Songs for the Christmas Party, CD-R**

This is a one-man band providing really thick-sounding music and kind of an angry message. However, it's Punk Rock 101: Start angry, sing about hating big business, your girlfriend, and life in general—and just play. A little more practice and better song writing is needed. (DM)

Operation Phoenix Records, PO Box 13380 Mill Creek, WA 98082

#### **Lovebirds – S/T, CD-R**

Lovebirds have some mind-numbingly simple drumbeats done with old-style synths in lo-fi production. They have some good noise erratics and disruptive elements that keep it interesting. It is mostly primitive techno stylizations, but also has corrupt folk songs like "Lie About," which sounds beautifully like it's going to fall apart, while "Not Fit" is noisily spastic with beatbox drums and guitar shrills. It's latter tracks like those that showcase the Lovebirds merits. (BA)

Jim Triplett, 1709 Macon St., McLean VA 22101, [lovebirdsmusic@yahoo.com](mailto:lovebirdsmusic@yahoo.com)

#### **Pale Man Made – Demo, CD**

The two songs on this debut show promise to come from Pale Man Made. Their messy guitar rock is minimal, energetic, and lacks pretension, and the girl and/

or guy vocals sound natural and rightly rough around the edges. (AJA)

[www.palemanmade.co.uk](http://www.palemanmade.co.uk), [info@palemanmade.co.uk](mailto:info@palemanmade.co.uk)

#### **Sailor Winters – OWE**

Less dense and suffocating than his last release, but the music benefits—there's even more going on this time. Subtle melodies, gorgeous noise, a glorious mess... fight the good fight and write Sailor Winters to death. (JJC)

Sailor Winters, 3211 Hampton Ridge Way, Snellville, GA 30078, [sailorwinters84@hotmail.com](mailto:sailorwinters84@hotmail.com)

#### **Spit on Your Grave – 2005 Demo, CD-R**

Lots of double bass and a super high-pitched snare on this one. Lots of boring metallic hardcore, too. (DA)

1539 Meritt Blvd., Baltimore, MD 21222, [www.myspace.com/spitonyourgravehardcore](http://www.myspace.com/spitonyourgravehardcore)

#### **Steel City Crime – S/T, CD-R**

I remember the late '90s, when Beer City Records put out a ton of bands like this: fast, punky hardcore. The playing and recording are solid. Nothing to get too excited about, but also nothing to complain about. The ska song is pretty great, though. (DA)

Self-released, PO Box 3241, University of Montevallo, Montevallo, AL 35115, [www.steelycitycrime.tk](http://www.steelycitycrime.tk)

#### **Twofold Truth – Let's Do This, CD**

Listening to Twofold Truth made me instantly think of the crazy vocals and metal of Swiz. An ultimate compliment is to say that Twofold Truth have copied that particular sound to a science. This is one of the rare demos worth the time to hunt down. (EA)

Self-released, [twofoldtruth@yahoo.com](mailto:twofoldtruth@yahoo.com)

## REVIEWER SPOTLIGHTS

in a sea of slurs, spikes, and body odor. When the first chord rang out, the crowd swelled, caught me in its grips, and dragged me towards the stage. Scared and captivated, I gave myself to the mercy of the beast while frontman Skip, clad in an oversized Daffy Duck T-shirt, sang his snot-nosed melodies and spit off the stage. After a few songs, any sort of concern for my immediate health or surroundings subsided. To some extent, I suppose the show and the band could be considered my introduction to this odd life. Sure, the Wynona Riders could be classified as a pop punk band, but as far as I'm concerned, their bratty and antagonistic tendencies separated them from their docile peers. Combining obscured poetics with youthful angst and a sense of humor (Power Rangers theme covers anyone?), the Wynona Riders' punk take on a pop movement remains unfortunately underappreciated. JD Salinger highlights the band mid-existence, at their finest. If you're skeptical of the name, take it with a grain of salt, and admit to yourself that at one point in time you either envied or had a severe Hollywood crush on the starlet in question.



### Reviewer's Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

**US Bombs, War Birth.** The US Bombs was widely regarded as one of punk's best bands long before the Hellcat Records debut *War Birth*, but it was exactly that record which really cemented their place in punk's history books. Long relying on Duane Peters' antics and snotty attitude, *War Birth* found the Bombs' sound matured and tightened, and their vocalist as volatile as ever. Featuring Peters' slurred vocals that often draw comparisons to those of Johnny Rotten, and the Bombs' catchy '77 style/street punk melodies, the record surges through 14 urgent tracks, including the classic title track and "Jaks," both still important staples of the US Bombs' live show. The raw production gives the songs an old fashioned sound, drawing on such influences as the Sex Pistols, UK Subs, and any number of '77 British punk bands. Sounding so unrefined with little regard for studio trickery, almost as if recorded in one sitting, is definitely an endearing quality in these days of pitch-corrected vocals and ubiquitous distortion. Still, what made *War Birth* so memorable for me was the time of its release. With MTV and mainstream radio jumping on the pop-punk bandwagon, old-school punk quickly became an endangered species. In the midst of this secondary pop-punk breakout, the US Bombs made punk dangerous again.

**Spinning on my turntable:** The Lawrence Arms, Oh! Calcutta!; Latterman, No Matter Where We Go; Exploding Fuck Dolls, Crack The Safe; Time Again, The Stories are True; Anti-Flag, For Blood and Empire.

### Reviewer Spotlight: Missy Paul (MP)

**Marilyn Manson, Mechanical Animals.** I was surprised the first time I heard this album. Gone, for the most part, were over-the-top lyrical attempts to shock. In their place were genuine statements of emotion. No longer was Marilyn Manson musically caustic and abrasive. The sound was a smooth, well-produced electronic and glam rock exploration. Though I knew Marilyn Manson was as much an actor and showman as musician, this was not a well-crafted reinvention. This was real. Whether a result of a meteoric rise to fame, or from all the roles he played, Manson had forever lost something along the way, and *Mechanical Animals* was a testament to this loss. Songs like "Great Big White World," "Disassociative" and "The Speed of Pain" highlight this emptiness. In between these confessions, Manson rounds out the album with social commentaries like "I Don't Like the Drugs," "Rock is Dead," and "The Dope Show." Ironically, "The Dope Show's" chorus, "They love you when you're on all the covers / when you're not they love another," proved a little too prophetic for Manson. It turned out the majority of his fans loved his shock rock, fuck you image, and not much else, and that's just sad. After all, the earnestness of *Mechanical Animals* is the most outrageous thing Manson could have ever done. I just wonder if Marilyn Manson realized his greatest album would be the one to alienate most of his fans, would he have still risked it all?

**What I'm Blowin' Up:** Cat Power, The Greatest; Stevie Nicks, Bella Donna; Nelly feat. Paul Wall, "Grillz"; Belle & Sebastian, *The Life Pursuit* (reviewed this issue); V/A, *Music From the OC 5*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

**Motörhead, Ace of Spades.** Well before DRI, Corrosion of Conformity, and Suicidal Tendencies, Motörhead blended the sound of heavy metal with the speed of punk rock. While a lot of people tag Motörhead a metal band, they defy classification as anything but rock 'n' roll. This album is Motörhead's best. *Ace of Spades* just drips sweat. Along with Bon Scott-era AC/DC, this is the pinnacle of sleazy rock 'n' roll (not to be confused with cock rock [a distinction possibly only in my mind]). While Motörhead's sound and subject matter made them unique, it's the songs that make this record great. Beneath the sleaze and speed "Ace of Spades," "Love Me Like a Reptile," and "The Chase is Better Than the Catch" are all ridiculously catchy songs. As well as Lemmy's love for speed, these songs betray his love for the pop music of the '60s. The sound of *Ace of Spades* and Motörhead alone are groundbreaking, and would have created a legacy, but it's the songs that make this record hold up so well to endless listens.

**Five recent acquisitions in regular rotation:** James Brown, *The 50th Anniversary Collection*; The Hold Steady, *Separation Sunday*; Queens of the Stone Age, *Over the Years and Through the Woods*; Sonny Sharrock, *Black Woman* reissue; Zombi, *Cosmos*.

### Reviewers Spotlight: Matthew Sibio (MS)

**Gameface, Every Last Time.** When choosing a spotlight, I've always felt championing the classics to be banal; instead I prefer to indulge in the personal classics, as is the case with Gameface's criminally overlooked *Revelation* debut. Sandwiched between the spunky *Three to Get Ready* and the more rock-oriented *Always On*, *Every Last Time* was

Gameface's initial flirtation with maturity, albeit with an ever-present double bass drum. While by today's standards Gameface's interpretation of punk sensibilities and lyrical sentimentality hardly seems revolutionary, at the time, most of *Revelation*'s devoted following seemed befuddled by what to make of the band. Gameface frequently addressed this lack of identity within the punk community—a lack that seemed to lead to their untimely demise. Nevertheless, *Every Last Time* brought the band its biggest audience yet, fueled by the not-quite-a-hit single/video "My Star." Lead singer Jeff Caudill's heart-on-your-sleeve lyrics significantly progressed but still retained the schmaltzy feel-good leanings one comes away with after reading a Nick Hornby novel. Songs like "The Pirate Song" and "Mean" never quite lived up to their potential as teenage anthems but instead now toil in the obscurity of Rev's forgotten back catalogue. I'll concede that it might never have been cool to make star metaphors, but at least Gameface had the guts to admit their inherent awkwardness. "It's funny how it all works out" sung Caudill on "If You Want My Opinion." How right he is.

**Burning the barn down, one song at a time:** Amateur Party, *Public Utility Complaint* CD-R single; the Zombies, *Odyssey and Oracle*; Loose Fur, *Born Again in the USA*; the Olivia Tremor Control, *Dusk at Cubist Castle*; Belle and Sebastian, *The Life Pursuit*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Tony Stasiek (TS)

**Federation X, American Folk Horror.** This Bellingham, WA, trio's Estrus Records debut came to mind after I heard something from another Northwesterner—Neko Case's "Dirty Knife," from her new *Fox Confessor Brings the Flood* CD. "Dirty Knife" is an articulate tale of a Washington state household that preaches the maddest elements of family values: they see apparitions together, burn their clothes together, and watch as their "blood runs crazy." But given Neko's treatment—with a mid-tempo creak, cello flourishes, and Stevie Nicks harpie chorus—the crazy blood sounds as though it's running through the veins of modern-day Emmylou Harris. Offering a more literal interpretation of similar events is Federation X's aptly named collection, which best resembles the Jesus Lizard's covers of Harry Smith's *Anthology of American Folk Music*. Tales of mouse blood and mountain murderers howl over a faster-than-your-heartbeat exclamation point, with thrills on every phrase à la early Drive Like Jehu and the Jesus Lizard. Like folk musicians, Federation X plays it sparse. There's no bass, just detuned guitars. No crash cymbals, just brutalized hi-hats. But no granola storyteller has weaved something like Fed X's "The Hatchetman," a gradually building anthem that explodes in riffed fury when it reaches its prey. We follow its killer through the forests of the Cascades, through forgotten reservation towns and through the secret military-training sites between. With similar tales on tracks such as "Charlie Jackie Freedom Pride" and "Southern Comfort," *American Folk Horror* is a dissertation on just how scary our nation can be.

**Overheard on the PA system of a suburban Fourth of July fireworks display:** The Flaming Lips, *At War With the Mystics*; the Gossip, *Standing in the Way of Control*; SOUND Team, *Work EP*; Spooky Dance Band, *Scary Reality/Nightmare Fantasy*; the Wipers, *Is This Real?*

### Reviewer Spotlight: Justin Yellucci (JV)

**Cheer-Accident, Enduring the American Dream.** If America ever needs a soundtrack to serve as its death knell, I vote for this obscure 1997 gem from Chicago's ruling experimental collective. Funeral dirges collide with angular post-punk pressure-cookers. Noisy minimalist drones wed somber piano ballads. Experimental prog refrains bleed into static and prepared chaos. And, through it all, Thymme Jones calmly disembowels contemporary America, braw-beating multinational corporations with his polished, almost theatrical voice, as he critiques materialism and rampant consumerism as the yin and yang of western religions. ("The public and private sectors collide / as the corporations buy up the night," he sings at point, his falsetto stretched over a lo-fi recording of a lonely, distant piano. "We lie under the sign and embrace / as they sell us the old dream of a new god.") But, it's the bizarre sonic landscape *Cheer-Accident* sculpts here that truly may sell the message: the way biting lyrics in catchy refrains are thrown off their linear courses by pounded pianos, segues laced with ear-piercing feedback and choral flourishes, or the frequent interjection of found sounds and blasts of punk/prog noise. It's an unnerving portrait of an American nightmare, but also the ideal introduction to a band that's required listening for anyone seeking an education in underground music.

**Currently breaking silence with Maker's Mark and:** Neutral Milk Hotel, *In the Aeroplane Over the Sea*; Will Oldham, *Ode Music*; UI, *Lifelike*; Rapeman, *Two Nuns and a Pack Mule*; Melvins, *Hostile Ambient Takeover*.



### Reviewer Spotlight: Mike Vinikour (MV)

**Dead Fink/Happy Toons, Rest in Pieces Split 7".** In 1984, when I was in high school, some of my punk friends who were one year older than me and in a handful of different bands settled into two groups: Dead Fink and Happy Toons. I didn't own too many records at this point, so getting another one was a treat. I couldn't believe that these guys I used to hang out with at school played such great hardcore punk, and not only that, but put out their own record. The whole thing was such a new concept to me that I was amazed that "anyone could do it." It was the perfect example of the DIY punk ethic! All of these guys went to my high school, were a year older than me, and I totally looked up to them as they got me into punk in the first place. I pretty much wore through my first copy because I played it so much, and, to this day, these songs will appear on any mix tape or CD I make for anyone. This was your typical Midwest hardcore record, which, at the time it was released, was still very fresh and exciting in the world of hardcore punk. They made only 500 of this split, and they are kind of hard to come by these days, but it's totally worth seeking out as it went under-appreciated by a good portion of record collectors and can still be found for a fair price.

**The neighbors to Combustion Manor leave their windows closed to avoid hearing the following:** Honeyhander, EP, *Cop Shoot Cop*; Headkick Facsimile; Neon Christ, 7"; Suicide, S/TLP; Adolescents, *Welcome to Reality 10*.

And "Sissy," Sofa Kit XL's bar-band parody, aims at an easy target. Ultimately, though, cutting half of the 44 tracks from this compilation would eliminate too many charming songs. The anthology succeeds, because it mixes different genres and rock sub-styles with origins in Columbia, Mo. For example, disc one features Trebuchet's melodic emo, the Follow's new wave, Doxies' southern rock, In Thicket's passionate indie rock with a great bridge, Brotha Jinx's rattling electronic music, Firefly Alliance's gospel/power-pop story song "Mr. Self Pity," and the Shades' "Ubiquitous You," an entertaining alt-country song that compares an ex to unpleasant objects, including a "crusty, dried booger." The second disc holds Miami Dragons' dance rock, the People's Republic of Klezmer, Cripplers' punkabilly, Digi-ki, three MCs' hip hop, Mark Speckman's creepy synth-and-sample song "Dr. Laura," several hard-rock and metal tunes, and Untamed Youth's outstanding surf tune, "Pabst Blue Ribbon." Pour a PBR for Jason Cafer. As a college radio super-DJ, Cafer recorded DJ shifts for broadcast on KCOU-FM during school breaks and odd hours so mid-Missourians would have left-of-the-dial music. As the man behind the *Comomusic Anthology*, he has researched and recruited bands and compiled and packaged an encyclopedic yet entertaining comp so people can sample the music of his beloved Columbia. (JM)

**Painfully Midwestern Records, [www.painfullymidwestern.com](http://www.painfullymidwestern.com)**

#### V/A — Dreddy Krueger Presents... Think Differently Music: Wu-Tang Meets the Indie Culture, CD

To some hip-hop heads, this record will definitely be banging. No doubt that this is an all-star cast for the back packers. Best of two worlds collide. Take some names from the realm of major label fame—like the boys of the Wu, like the RZA, GZA, U-God and La the Darkman—and blend it with some of indie hip-hop folk Del the Funky Homosapien, J-Live, Aesop Rock, Byata and more. Originally, I wrote off the Wu, when they first hit the scene, for their thug style of hip-hop. What many missed was the time and effort that was put into the tracks: great samples from obscure sources used in smart ways, good flow from the emcee that complement the track, etc.. The songs on *Daddy Krueger Presents...* are entertaining when you wrap your head around them. Aesop's presence or Del's outlook and J-Live's hope bring a surprisingly new life to the Wu. "Too much mediocrity, not enough passion within hip hop" was a shared belief that Dreddy Krueger strove for when putting together. So the next time you hear "Wu-Tang Clan ain't nothing to fuck with," you better believe it. Highly Recommended and then some. (DM)

**Think Differently Music/ Babygrande, [www.thinkdifferentlymusic.com](http://www.thinkdifferentlymusic.com) [www.babygrande.com](http://www.babygrande.com)**

#### V/A — Otis' Opuses, CD

Comprised chiefly of representative selections from recent Kill Rock Stars releases, this is the familiar budget-priced CD designed to turn the listener on to new bands and albums to claim their rainy-day pen-

nies. A diverse collection of names familiar and fresh, there's sure to be a surprise or two in here for most any listener not currently employed by the label. Witness pop confections by Stereo Total, Shoplifting's fiery postpunk, HC snarl from supergroup Wrangler Brutes, Vladislav Delay-assisted electro-hop by Gold Chains & Sue Cie, a carnival-esque singalong from Gravy Train!!!, and a toe-tapping pop jam that's landed Comet Gain on my own shopping list. Plus there's a 1979 classic from the far-too-long-neglected Delta 5. And heaven forbid I neglect to mention the Decemberists, the Gossip, the Makers, Harvey Danger, Deerhoof, Nedelle, and Linda Perry. (CB)

**Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave, PMB 418, Olympia, WA 98501, [www.killrockstars.com](http://www.killrockstars.com)**

#### V/A — Protect: A Benefit for the National Association to Protect Children, CD

NoFX's "Leaving Jesusland" sets the tone for this 26-song comp: a bitter anthem slamming self-righteous supporters of the ruling elite who battle same-sex marriage but whose sense of social responsibility may not extend to helpless children lost within the nation's family services programs. But the disc is far from heavy-handed, overflowing instead with an energetic mix of southern California punk, guitar-driven alt- and pop-rock, and post-hardcore explosions, much of it unreleased elsewhere. The Lovekill, Anti-Flag, Darkest Hour, the Ergs and Smoke Or Fire burn among the brightest, though Jawbreaker fans will devour a live take on "Want," and someone should probably toss Joan Jett a copy of the Soviетtes' "Middle of the Night." Joey Cape and Matt Skiba pop in here or there with their acoustic guitars, and who could resist hearing Coalesce erupt as they offer a take on the Jesus Lizard's "Mouth Breather?" Not me. (JV)

**Fat Wreck Chords, P.O. Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119-3690, [www.fatwreck.com](http://www.fatwreck.com)**

#### V/A — Public Service, CD

There's nothing better than when some old punk record I grew up with gets reissued on CD so current and future generations of punks can hear this great music that has been unavailable for longer than most of them have probably been alive. This compilation came out in 1982 on Smoke Seven Records, which was a label run by the guys in RF7. It easily ranks high on my list of all-time great (though obscure) comps. This features JFA, Sin 34, Moral Decay, Crankshaft, Sadist Faction, The Sins, The Demented, Redd Kross, Youth Gone Mad, Naughty Women and Dead Youth. Each band delivers two or three songs, and the music is pretty standard fare (and excellent) early 1980s-sounding hardcore. As far as I know, the only songs that were ever reissued somewhere were the JFA ones; everything else was only found on this compilation. As a bonus, they included the Genocide tracks from their split with M.I.A that was released on the same label. The sound on this CD is excellent, and whoever did the mastering job is to be commended. The booklet is a little lacking, as they omitted the lyrics to all the songs that were printed on the back cover of the original vinyl. That's a minor gripe though, I'm just happy to see that this thing got a proper reissue. (MXV)

**Puke'n'Vomit, [www.pukenvomit.com](http://www.pukenvomit.com)**

## REVIEWED THIS MONTH @ PUNKPLANET.COM

- About the Fire** - Six Anthems From the Comfortably Jaded, CDEP
- Actitone** - This New Chemistry, CDEP
- Ackleys, the** - S/T, CD
- Action Action** - An Army of Shapes Between Wars, CD
- Actual Birds** - The Sky is Full of Ghosts, CD
- Airport Cathedral** - Jetlag, CD
- Aloha** - Some Echoes, CD
- And the Saga Continues** - Ferocious, 7"
- Angelville** - We Are the Wolves, CD
- Assacre** - Fantastic Illusions Worth Dying For, CD
- Autistic Youth** - S/T, 7"
- Baboon Show, the** - Don't Don't Don't, CD
- Below the Sound** - Three, CD
- Black Bear** - S/T, CD
- Blacklisted** - The Beat Goes On, CD
- Blame Game** - Honey and Salt, LP
- Blame Gary** - Between the Syntax Errors, CD
- Blank Stare** - S/T, 7"
- Blood on the Tracks** - S/T, CDEP
- Bloody Crackdown** - Cowboy Dubyah's Fal-lujah Bar B-Q, CD
- Brain Box** - Serial Attraction, CD
- Bravo Fucking Bravo** - II, CD
- Bricks for Shoulders** - You Are, Therefore I Am, CD
- Broken Spindles** - Inside/Absent, CD
- The Bugs** - S/T, CD
- Burning Idols** - The Feeding Bird, CDEP
- Burst** - Origo, CD
- Buttersprites** - S/T, CD
- Caldwell** - Accidental Renovation, CD
- Carry the Casket/The Mistake** - Split, 7"
- Cassette** - S/T, CD
- Catfish Haven** - Please Come Back, CDEP
- Chicharones, the** - When Pigs Fly, CD
- Cipher** - Children of God's Fire CD
- Circle of Tyrants, the** - S/T, CD
- Classic Struggle, the** - Feel Like Hell, CD
- Clear Days Always** - Ten Fingers: Five Yours, Five Mine, and Habits Like Self Love, CD
- Clumsy Lovers, the** - Smart Kid, CD
- Colonial Excess** - Mute EP, CD
- Comrade Kilkin/Omission** - Split, CD
- Costa, Matt** - Songs We Sing, CD-R
- Cougar Party, the** - Heartbreakers/Home-wreckers, CD
- Crisis What Crisis** - Christopher Street Day, CDEP
- Culprits, the** - Thursday Night Hardcore, 7"
- Dance Disaster Movement/Kill Me Tomorrow** - Beautiful Guys, CDEP
- Daniel Striped Tiger** - Condition CD
- Das Kapital** - Denying the West, CD
- Days End, the** - The Day's End, CD
- Deconditioned** - Where Am I?, LP
- DeNunzio** - Continuous Vaudeville, CD
- Devillock** - These Graves, CDEP
- Dissimiliars** - Landmine, 7"
- Dohrn** - S/T, CD
- Donuts, the** - The Monkey Wrench Gang, CD
- Ed Gein** - Judas Goats & Dieseleaters, CD
- Encrypt Manuscript** - Encrypt Manuscript, 7"
- Ephen Rian** - The Special Referendum, CD
- Ester Drang** - Rocinate, CD
- Expectorated Sequence** - Hairbomb, CD
- Fellow Project** - Where's the Wire?, 10"
- Finkelstein, Norman** - An Issue of Justice: Origins of the Israel/Palestine Conflict, CD
- Flakes, the** - Can't Stand to See You Fall - CDEP
- Foxx, the** - Instrument/Come to Japan, 7"
- Four Barrel Ghost** - Pack it Up!, CD
- Fuck the Facts** - Mullet Fever, CD
- Gabriel, Joshua** - 21st Century Blues, CDEP
- Galluci** - Soca Punk, CD
- Geography** - Life in Binary, CDEP
- God's Temple of Family Deliverance/Unholy Mountain** - Better Blades/Thee Black Wizards
- Awaken at Dawn, AKA the Lord Beasley Never Sleeps** - Split, LP
- Great American Breakdown, the** - Wake You Nowa, Okinawa, CDEP
- Guitar Wolf** - Golden Black, CD
- Haaga, Michael** - The Plus and Minus Show, CD
- Harrison Bergeron** - S/T, CD
- Hat Party, the** - Agents and Thieves, CD
- Head Like a Kite** - Random Portraits of the Home Movie, CD
- Hell or Highwater** - Dichotomy of the Damned, CD-R
- Hero & the Victor, the** - The Villainy of the Ordinary, CD
- Hiker/Biker** - Politics and Fucking, CD
- Holy Kiss, the** - Back to Colma/Grey Horizons, 7"
- Host Unknown, the** - The Serotonin Sounds Of, CDEP

## REVIEWED THIS MONTH @ PUNKPLANET.COM

**Hugh J. and the Picnic** - Asleep, CD  
**Icollide** - Distractions, CD  
**In My Way** - S/T, 7"  
**I Self Devine** - Self Destruction, CD  
**Israel, Dan** - S/T, CD  
**It Burns/The Phenoms** - I-57, Split 7"  
**Jaks** - Here Lies the Body of Jaks, CD  
**Jones, Stone Jack** - Bluefolk, CD  
**KG Fields** - Arminaminarm, CDEP  
**Kabuki Thunder** - Go to Hell/Fashion Trash Action, 7"  
**Kalikak Family, the** - May 23rd 2007, CD  
**Karate for Kids/Frame** - Split, 7"  
**Knut** - Terraformer, CD  
**Latterman** - No Matter Where We Go, CD  
**Lichens** - The Psychic Nature of Being, CDEP  
**Magnetophone** - The Man Who Ate the Man, CD  
**Manikins, the** - Highschool Goodboy, 10"  
**Masuran** - Elephant Rocks, CD-R  
**Metalux** - Victim of Space, CD  
**Miles Away** - S/T, CD  
**Miles From Land** - Cry Happiness, CDEP  
**Minds, the** - We Got the Pop, 7"  
**Miss Autopsy** - Sweet Killers, CD  
**M's, the** - Future Women, CD  
**9MM** - On the Edge, CD  
**Necro & III Bill** - Street Villains, Vol. 2, CD  
**New Electric** - S/T, CDEP  
**New Flesh, the** - Parasite!, CD  
**New Thrill Parade, the** - S/T, LP  
**NOFX** - Leaving Jesusland, 7"  
**North Star Infinite** - Sketches of Human Circuitry, CDEP  
**Nous Non Plus** - S/T, CD  
**Number 12 Looks Like You, the** - Nuclear. Sad. Nuclear, CD  
**Odd Clouds** - Liquid Moon Ritual, CDEP  
**Omission** - Refuse Regress, CD  
**Out Cold** - Goodbye Cruel World, LP  
**Paulson** - All at Once, CD  
**Piano Drag** - Possessions and Positions, CD  
**Pine Hill Haints, the** - God, the Devil, and the Two by the Gate, LP  
**Plan R** - My Friend is Dead, 7"  
**Plus Ones, the** - Oh Me of Little Faith, CD  
**Power Lloyd** - World Cowboy, CD  
**Quags, the** - Devil's Music, CD  
**Rancid Vat** - Rancid Vat vs. the Rest of the World, 2xCD  
**Rattus** - S/T, CD  
**Reactionary 3/True North** - Split, LP  
**Reptoids** - Park a Tiger, CD  
**Rippers, the** - Raw Evil, 7"  
**Rollo Tomasi** - Work Slow Crush Foes, CD  
**Rogue State** - Statues That Fall, CD  
**Salesman** - Trendsetters, CD  
**Sarandon** - The Big Flame, 7"  
**Semaphore** - Make, CD  
**SevenOneFive** - We Don't Feel Like This for Free, CD  
**Shattered Realm** - From the Dead End Blocks Where Life Means Nothing, CD  
**Shaw, Matthew** - Convenience, CD  
**Shooting At Unarmed Men** - Soon There Will Be, CDEP  
**Silentist** - Nightingales EP, CD  
**Sixfifteens, the** - Feature, Conference, Transfer, CD  
**Skullfuzz** - S/T, CD  
**Skyline Obscura, the** - Falling is Not an Option, CD  
**Smithson, Dawn** - Safer Here, CD  
**Sourvin** - Emerald Vulture, CDEP  
**Spring of Rage, the** - The Glory of Nothing, CD  
**Swellers, the** - Beginning of the End Again, CD  
**Taxpayer/Tanks** - Split, 7"  
**Test Icicles** - For Screening Purposes Only, CD  
**They Found My Naked Corpse Face Down in the Snow/Evening at the Black Horse** - Split, 7"  
**Trailerpark Tornados, the** - Mata Al Contacto, CD  
**Treasure Chest at the End of the Rainbow/Mutiny on the Bounty** - Split, CD  
**Triumph of Lethargy Skinned Alive to Death** - Helpless, CD  
**Twilight Transmission, the** - The Dance of Destruction, CD  
**Unfold** - Aeons-Agony, CD  
**United Movement** - Rock Destroys Your Mind, CD  
**Unlucky Atlas** - The Course of Empire, CD-R  
**Vaz, the** - The Lie That Matches the Furniture, CD  
**Vets, the** - Ad Infinitum, CD  
**Violet** - The Last Cathedral, CD  
**Whalen, Lance/English, Andrew** - Evening Mourning, 7"  
**Winston Smith** - The Culmination of the Evolution of Destruction, CD  
**With Resistance** - Real Hardcore Kids Have Day Jobs, CD  
**World War IX** - Panic Attack, CD  
**Worst, the** - S/T, EP  
**WrenchintheWorks** - Prodigal Transmission, CD  
**Young Canadians** - No Escape, CD  
**Young People** - Five Sunsets in Four Days, CDEP  
**Zoomen** - S/T, 10"  
**V/A - Hostage Radio Compilation 2005**, CD  
**V/A - Kiss or Kill Presents Vol. 2** - CD

# DVDS



**Pancake Mountain vols 1-4**  
Scott Stuckey, producer

If you're into any sort of underground music and have children, you are probably well familiar with the mind-numbing characteristics of much of contemporary children's music. Bands and musicians such as the Wiggles, Laurie Berkner, and Raffi have created a canon of songs that means well, but ultimately presents kids with an overly safe, often banal, representation of music. Not surprisingly, such mainstream children's artists play it safe, trying to be as inclusive as possible to appeal to the largest audience. The inevitable result of such a strategy is a collection of CDs and DVDs that share the same sense of predictability throughout. They sound, in short, how music for kids has always sounded.

Turning this cautious world of children's music on its head is a wonderful new three volume set of DVDs from the Pancake Mountain television series. For those that are unaware of the program, Pancake Mountain is a Washington, DC-based cable-access show that allows independent rockers to try their hand at children's entertainment. Want to see noted DC scenester and Dischord Records founder Ian MacKaye perform an original composition entitled "Vowel Movement?" It's here on volume one. Or how about Ted Leo (a current favorite in this writer's household: my two year-old daughter squeals in delight as Leo attempts to hit high vocal notes, as they are the same notes she hits when she wants attention) doing a kick-ass rendition of "Wheels on the Bus?" Check out volume three. Such luminaries as Henry Rollins, George Clinton, and Shirley Manson of Garbage also make appearances in numerous episodes. And if this sounds a little too adult, such characters as Senor Suds and Blueberry Boy are there to provide comic relief, giving kids a chance to laugh—and even learn a bit (a strong anti-consumerist streak runs throughout the series)—in between the bursts of rock and roll. At least in our family, these DVDs have given my daughter and me a sense of cultural common ground: we now actually share a few favorite bands. And believe me, there is no greater joy in parenthood than introducing your child to anything that they come to love.

The Pancake Mountain series makes it known that music for children need not limit itself to the genre we know as "children's music." At the same time, it illustrates that there is much in current indie rock that speaks to the aesthetic tastes of children. One sees this in Deerhoof, a band whose vocalist, Satomi Matsuzaki, often seems to have the voice of an actual toddler. It is therefore unsurprising when this band gets a tremendous response from the Pancake Mountain audience.

Yet perhaps the most entertaining aspect of these DVDs, at least for an adult, is seeing many of today's hottest bands interact with such characters as Muppet-wannabe Rufus Leaking (who jokingly confuses Bright Eyes' Conor Oberst with old blue eyes—Frank Sinatra), and Captain Perfect, a grown man in superhero garb who dances onstage with many of the acts. This makes for entertaining children's television, and seems to add a level of much-needed humility to many of these self-important "artists." It's hard to maintain your cooler-than-everything posture when you're being heckled by a grown man in a top hat and a cape.

To many, the delight of this series may sound like a bunch of aging punks trying to relive their childhoods, or, now that they are starting to have kids of their own, attempting

**A**bout our reviews: We review independently produced DVDs. We don't limit our reviews to just music DVDs or just low-budget horror flicks, or any of the other indie rag review fare. We take on all comers (though we do reserve the right to not review some stuff for space reasons). What we mean is that we will take as much time writing about a new and amazing music DVD as we will a new foreign import or a re-release of a lost classic. The key is that it's made outside of the Hollywood system. Making a film, or a videozine, or documenting your band's tour, or anything else that ends up on a disc, is a tiny miracle, we know—so even if your review isn't the greatest, good on you for making it anyway.

to force their own interests onto their offspring. The more cynical may even see such products as just another example of market segmentation, showing once and for all that the indie scene is just as business savvy as the mainstream. These are both valid arguments that, as children's music continues to expand its boundaries, deserve critical attention. But one look at the expressions of joy and exhilaration on the faces of both band members and the children dancing on stage during Arcade Fire's "Wake Up" (found on Pancake Mountain volume two) is enough to put some of these concerns permanently to rest. For the length of this performance, artist and audience come together in a moment that is both wildly exhilarating and refreshingly innocent. Here, on display for all to witness, is the splendor of children of all ages enjoying the power of a beautiful song.—Michael Carriere  
[www.pancakemountain.com](http://www.pancakemountain.com)

**Heavy Metal Parking Lot: Ultimate Underground**  
Fuck yeah! The cult video of fans outside of a May 31st, 1986 Judas Priest show finally gets a proper release. Circulated for 20 years as a bootleg, filmmakers John Heyn and Jeff Krulik have beefed up the 15-minute documentary with tons of extras, which really make the disc. The sequels *Monster Truck Parking Lot*, *Neil Diamond Parking Lot*, and *Harry Potter Parking Lot* are all sort of funny, but not nearly as much as the original. Other than the sequels, viewers are treated to local media coverage of the film, the basement collection of one rabid heavy metal fan, and a short on the destruction of the Capitol Centre (where *Heavy Metal Parking Lot* was initially filmed), along with interviews of people that used to work there. The best extras, though, are *Parking Lot Alumni*, in which the directors track down four of the people from the movie and see what they've been up to for the last 20 years, and the ability to press the "angle" button on your DVD remote to see what a 10th generation video dub looks like. Fantastic. Sure, this DVD could be written off as stoner fodder, but it's a really great glimpse into a specific time, place, and subculture that isn't often covered. Metal rules... all that punk shit sucks. (Dave Hofer)  
Parking Lot Productions, [www.heavymetalparkinglot.com](http://www.heavymetalparkinglot.com)

**A Hundred Dollars and a T-Shirt**  
Produced by Joe Biel  
Directed by Rev. Phil and Joe Biel

Early in this documentary about zine culture, Moe Bowstern of the zine Xtra Tuf describes the experience of bringing zines onboard a working boat. "My skipper actually said, 'I could do a zine!' says Bowstern. "You just write about what you did today and what you ate and put a recipe in there and then you write about your bike and then write about stealing something!" Bowstern goes on to say that the skipper wrote something for the publication Pacific Fisher-

man which paid him with \$100 and a T-shirt. "And I said, 'Fred, if I give you a shirt and a hundred bucks, will you write for me?'"

The skipper argues that zines aren't real writing. He's the only nay-sayer in this hour-long survey of zine culture in Portland, Ore. As the documentary unfolded, I thought it would make perfect viewing for people like the skipper or my mom, people who don't understand the whole concept. But by the end I was questioning why it had been so long since I had made a zine myself.

The DVD is organized into chapter headings that cover topics like Who Makes Zines? and How are Zines Distributed? But this isn't really a how-to guide; more like a celebration. The filmmakers were smart to focus on the Portland scene. The point isn't to tell the comprehensive story of zines, even the story of zines in Portland. But by selecting such a slender piece of the pie, this movie hasn't made me full but rather hungry for more pie. Surely that hunger is the point, to go out and create and search on my own, not just to be content with living vicariously by watching people on a DVD.

Like a good zine, the documentary is high quality (the video and audio are top notch with smart music and graphics) without being slick. Mostly this is a film of talking heads talking about themselves, their work, and the bigger picture. It's good to see zines getting the same documentary treatment that music has long received. A few stories are illustrated by "dramatic recreations," that are surprisingly charming, not annoying. The credits note that this production was assembled using only borrowed materials—very cool indeed.

(Andrew Reynolds)

Microcosm Publishing [www.microcosmpublishing.com](http://www.microcosmpublishing.com)

**Kid Dynamite – Four Years in One Gulp**

After the highly disappointing DVD teaser that

was included with 2003's best of, *Cheap Shots, Youth Anthems*, Jade Tree follows through with a full-length DVD chronicling the history of Kid Dynamite. Thankfully opening with an explanation as to why the DVD included with *Cheap Shots* was such a letdown, the documentary progresses to tell the story of the rather short-lived band through interviews with friends as well as the band themselves. There's no chapter selections, so you're urged to watch the entire thing in one sitting. I would consider myself to be a fan of the band, but not so diehard that I didn't want to skip some of the liberal live footage that's interspersed between interviews. The pace of the disc gets a little slow near the end when friends start discussing the pros and cons of the reunion shows the band did, placing the emphasis more on their feelings and opinions of the shows rather than why they did them in the first place. The reasons are there, but there's too much "I dunno... it kind of tainted the memory for me" sort of nostalgia that has little impact on those of us who never saw the band or hung out with them on a regular basis. Overall, the documentary (narrated by vocalist Jay Shevchuk) is extremely well put together, and appeals not only to fans of the band, but serves as an excellent insight to a DIY band and all of the difficulties that come along with it: frustrations while constantly touring, cramped quarters, dumpy venues (glad to see the Fireside made it onto the disc), etc. Other than those two problems, *Four Years in One Gulp* is a fair tribute to an exceptional punk band. (Dave Hofer)  
Jade Tree, 2310 Kemwynn Rd, Wilmington, DE 19810, [www.jadetree.com](http://www.jadetree.com)

#### NardWuar The Human Serviette

NardWuar The Human Serviette, is a host on Canada's Much Music video channel. "Serviette" means "table napkin" for those of you not up on your antiquated linen terminology. Why does he call himself a napkin? As far as I can tell, it's for the same reason that he wears a plaid beret and chortles his catch phrase, "Doot doola doot doo," to the tune of "Shave and a haircut," at the end of his celebrity interviews—because he's zany!

In your heart of hearts, you already know whether or not you think this sounds delightful or dreadful. Trust in this instinct; it will not disappoint.

The press materials are comparing NardWuar to Ali G and the cast of *The Daily Show*. But what those spoof interviewers bring to their comedy is a sense of gravitas. They are asking deeply serious questions that happen to be completely wrongheaded. The fun is in watching the interview subjects struggle

to give thoughtful, on-message answers to stupid questions.

NardWuar asks silly questions or skips the questions altogether and just makes peculiar statements and points the microphone at celebrities. These celebrities, in turn, look bored or uncomfortable. Doot doola doot doo!

"This DVD does NOT include any music by any of the artists interviewed," warns the cover art. Instead, NardWuar accosts Henry Rollins, Jello Biafra, Franz Ferdinand, Marilyn Manson, Sir Mix A Lot, Vanilla Ice, Ian MacKaye, Drew Barrymore, Wesley Willis, Pam Grier, and Snoop Dogg. He's been at this for quite some time. Elderly-looking video shows him behaving unpleasantly with Kurt Cobain, Courtney Love, and Gorbachev, sadly not all at the same time. There are other interviews I've missed—it's a two-disc set with a running time of five and a half hours and life is too short. Doot doola doot doo!

(Andrew Reynolds)

Alternative Tentacles Records [www.alternativetentacles.com](http://www.alternativetentacles.com)

#### North Awesometon Bears

Curiously high production values are squandered on this wholly undelightful romp through the xenophobic, homophobic, and just plain dumb town of North Awesometon, New Jersey. Most viewers would likely guess at the sudden downturn their sense of self worth might take just from glancing at the box: "DVD!" the cover proudly proclaims, listing this feature inside a fancy star, while the logo's "W" and "T" inexplicably drip blood (the movie contains no horror, either real or imagined, save that experienced by the viewer regarding his or her wasted hour and a half). So lacking in innovation is this movie—the plot of which can easily be arrived at by anyone who has a) previously seen another movie and b) knows the title of this one—that I am upset to remember that no such town exists, because I would very much like to hate it. Thankfully, "bloopers" are included in the package, so the very thin line between what was intended to be funny and what was not (flubbed lines, the director's car getting parked in by a tanker truck, and a pretty girl) can be thoroughly explored. These bloopers are significantly more entertaining than the actual film, although primarily because they are shorter. No reason can be found to recommend this film, although I can forward the positive affirmation that it is, indeed, a DVD. (Anne Elizabeth Moore)

Nfilmcore [www.northawesometon.com](http://www.northawesometon.com)

# ZINES



## Ong Ong #2

Learned zine folks allegedly claim that 43% of all zines are conceived out of the following situation: after a night of drinking, a handful of pals think, "Obviously, we are into Cool Shit, and obviously other people want to read about the Cool Shit we're into. So let's go write the Great American Novel of Cool Shit, so all those wannabe hipster minions will worship the ground we hover above." Then they snub out their cigarettes and have sex with each other until feelings are hurt. Usually, the resulting zine means a Guided by Voices interview, some contrived, rant-filled reviews, and a dozen too many inside jokes. It's two years late, they printed 900 less than intended, and half the contributors flaked because they're nihilists. At least it's saddle stitched!

Alas, we know what scientific statistics mean in a subjective world: absolutely nothing! In the case of the zine *Ong Ong*, the creators are actually into legitimate Cool Shit, as these Seattle-based cultural snobs compile fascinating articles into a hefty informational tome that doesn't reek of hype's hysterics. It's a cover to cover read, inspiring an insatiable appetite for Eastern European beers, Dusan Makavejev's films, New Zealand drone music, food from the Wayward Cafe, and other obscure topics. Either this crew rolls deep in some awesome nerd-dom, or we have some sharp editorial leadership going on here.

Sure, *Ong Ong* lacks focus, but I'd prefer to perceive the folks behind this as the expert eccentrics who hone their hobbies out of sincere curiosity for the unique rather than trendspotting's inclinations for social capital. At least it's not another uninspired "theme" issue. Most impressively, like true tastemakers, *Ong Ong*'s contributors helm each article with a fanboy's enthusiasm and thoughtful information download. Never once do they come off as patronizing or insulting to their readership—something that consistently happens even with pedestrian Bloc Party interviews. But each piece encourages and informs, demonstrating more care in the subject than in their image, and that's the kind of genuine zine-making this world needs. Even the production values shine, with a multi-silk-screened cover and similarly decorated slip. That's even better than its saddle stitching. Nothing fools a zine reviewer more than dedication to craft.

As if that's not enough, for extra credit, this issue comes with a Dragon's Eye Recordings CD sampler built into the zine. This compilation of minimalist ambient music features music by Tyler Potts, Yann Novak, M Evans, Son of Rose, Wyndel Hunt, and Hakea. If I were to prance around my bedroom while lighting candles, this is exactly what I would listen to. (VC)

"Very Cheap," Lucy Morehouse, 734 10th Ave. E, Seattle, WA 98102, [www.ongongpress.com](http://www.ongongpress.com)

## 21 Days On A Greyhound Bus

I'm aware of the fact that travel and counterculture gestures can often provide individuals with a desperately needed awakened sense of self. However, thanks to a few well-versed individuals (who for the sake of thinly veiled mystery shall remain nameless) the process of documenting events such as Greyhound bus journeys, dumpster diving, heavy coffee consumption, and cross-country love in zine format is excessively banal. There are exceptions of rare inspiration and burning new blood amongst the rigidity, but unfortunately, Shaun Winter isn't one of them. The near 100-page semi-book is full of dully objective recollections, notes, and journal entries. The accompanying DVD offers some well-captured grayscale and sepia visual shots, but the author's overdramatic narrative melancholy spoils any possible bounty: e.g. "You'll never feel as alone as you do in a Greyhound bus seat." I'm not trying to belittle anyone's experience, but I personally beg to differ. (BM)

\$10 US, \$13 International, Shaun Winter, 41 Tilstone PL, Rochester, NY 14618, [www.nowherecollective.net](http://www.nowherecollective.net)

## A Beat of Our Own #1

Yet another cut-n-paste punk zine, *A Beat of Our Own* is full size, newsprint, and bursting with unrealized ambition. It includes e-mail interviews with the Anti-Nowhere League, the Detonators, Mission of Burma, Jim of Jersey Beat zine, and others, rounded out with a discography of Dangerhouse Records and album reviews. This zine could benefit from some extreme copyediting and layout consistency, but you know, that wouldn't be punk at all. (AM)

\$2 US, \$3 Mexico & Canada, \$4 world, Jared Forman, PO Box 7066 Hampton, VA 23666, [www.x1984x.com/abeatoourown](http://www.x1984x.com/abeatoourown)

## AK Ink #18

The writers behind this Alaska-based zine have a good sense of humor about Alaska's remoteness from the rest of the punk world. Nevertheless, they steadfastly support their own small homegrown scene by featuring interviews with bands like StuntCock, whose album title "Geographically Fucked" is a sarcastic riff on the average Alaskan punk's attitude about their place in the world. *AK Ink* also features a number of short but fascinating essays covering diverse subjects. One essay is a nasty anecdote about prison life from an incarcerated punk who discovers, to his horror, that the cigarette he shared with a fellow inmate is comprised of "day's old Skoal chewing tobacco fresh out of a C.O.'s mouth!" Another essay by a white Frenchman, who grew up in the very housing projects that figured so prominently in the news recently, offers a unique perspective on the rioting: "All these kids rioting

right now are waiting for their (government) check at the end of the month, so they can buy a brick of hash to resell for extra cash." (AC)

\$1 or trade, PO Box 244235, Anchorage, AK 99524, [www.akink.org](http://www.akink.org)

## Are You Supposed to Make Them Smile?

Short stories offer descriptive narratives into a conflicted mind. Introspective protagonists agonize over the should've/would've/could'ves, but stand quivering, anxious over the consequences of being well intentioned. The stories are gripping—toeing anxiety with tedious descriptions and a well-timed, conflicting thought. I'm going to go slit my wrists while jumping off a cliff into a pit of starving dogs now. Shoot me when I hit the ground. (VC)

[No price given], Bill Stenross, 41 Tilstone PL, Rochester, NY 14618, [www.nowherecollective.net](http://www.nowherecollective.net)

## Chanimal Planet #3

The cover of this personal zine depicts a photocopy of a cigar-box lid that the writer's co-opted as a tribute to his real-life cigar box stash of adolescent memorabilia: "a few pictures, fliers for shows, and a couple of obituaries cut out from the local newspaper." While much of this zine contains the sort of nostalgic lament about past loves and opportunities lost that are common among twentysomethings stuck between college and the working world, there are some moments of novel humor. For instance, after months of dealing with a persistent cough followed by the onset of a series of rashes, the writer discovers that he has scabies. Everything has to be cleared out of his apartment, the manager of his flop house orders him a new mattress, and adding to the overall indignity, charges him \$25 for time spent administering to all the aggravation. (AC)

Free or trade, Channing Henson, [channing\\_one@yahoo.com](mailto:channing_one@yahoo.com)

## Dirt Culture #12

A hefty music mag out of Las Cruces, NM, *Dirt Culture* features swell layout and a consistent sense of excitement that, at times, causes the zine to really shine. While some of the interviews look great, they lack content or depth. The GWAR interview was the highlight of this issue, and I actually learned a lot about them (which is the point of an interview, I guess). This zine is chock-full of ads, which makes the size misleading. It's about the same size as an issue of Maximum Rocknroll from 10 years ago. (JB)

Free, [dirtculture.com](http://dirtculture.com)

## The East Village Inky #29

The East Village Inky #29 is a tribute to zinester Ayun Halliday's cat Jambo. Filling the pages with anecdotes and comics illustrating his life, Ayun writes intelligently and with a sense of humor, relating funny stories of

**A**bout our reviews: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. The zines to the left on the opening page—the ones with the magazine cover reproduced—are designated as “lead” reviews by the reviewer. That means it’s a zine that really stands out for them this time around. But it certainly doesn’t mean that the many other zines reviewed aren’t good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn’t like your zine, it’s just one person’s opinion, so don’t freak out. We’re sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!

This issue’s reviewers: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Joe Biel (JB), Ari Charney (AC), Vincent Chung (VC), Liz Mason (LM), Brian Moss (BM), Claire Sewell (CS) Edited by Laura Pearson

Jambo and dealing with his death in both a serious and not-so-serious way. Halliday keeps the death of her pet—trivial to some and tragic to others—in perspective and writes with each reaction in mind. The comics are well-drawn, humorous, and fill the pages, corners, and margins of the zine. She acknowledges that the tribute becomes excessive, which it does, when read cover to cover. However, her writing is strong and her stories are enjoyable. (AJA)

\$2, Ayun Halliday, PO Box 22754, Brooklyn, NY 11202, [www.ayunhalliday.com](http://www.ayunhalliday.com)

#### Fancy #4

This glossy New York zine offers a veritable hodge-podge of entertaining content. A number of man-on-the-street photo collages highlight fashion dos and fashion disasters. One article chronicles the history behind obscure ‘60s Singaporean garage rockers the Trailers. Another article offers an exhaustive survey of the very best hot dog stands in New York, its intrepid writer having trekked through several boroughs to discover the dogs with the snappiest casings and most unusual condiments. But the most fascinating article, “Rebbe to Wear,” details the subtle differences in dress among the half dozen or so sects of the ultra-orthodox Hasidic Jews in Brooklyn. The article includes numerous photos documenting elderly Hasidim unbelievably attired in silk brocaded jackets, knickers, and furry hats, as well as various youth fashions such as the suitably demure jeans skirt for trendy adolescent Hasidic girls. (AC)

Free, PO Box 110411, Brooklyn, NY 11211, [www.fancymag.com](http://www.fancymag.com)

#### Fanorama #29

A queer-oriented zine, which also circulates its way around the prison set, Fanorama covers prisoner rights, political and social issues, gay rights, and music. This issue is filled with amateur male-nude photos and comes with an insert of additional pictures. Fanorama offers a nudity-free version of issue 29, as well. Not exactly my cup of tea, I was mostly touched by the opening letter, telling of zinester REB’s loss of his parents. His straightforwardness is touching, and his writing transparent in understanding one moment in his life. (AJA)

\$5, 109 Arnold Ave, Cranston, RI 02905, [fanorama@aol.com](mailto:fanorama@aol.com)

#### Free Poetry #13

A contemporary poetry journal laid out in half-size form with color background print, Free Poetry brings together poetry and comics. A majority of the poetry follows suit with modernist-inspired deconstruction, free form, and subject matter that tends to be either disjointed or surreal. Most of the poems bury their meanings, if they have any at all, and are more preoccupied with the weight of the words themselves than

any overall impression created. A few poets are able to remove themselves from their work and raise a question or portray a scene or feeling representing a larger issue. These are the standouts. (AJA)

Free, SSO Press, PO Box 2645, Olympia, WA 98507, [www.ssopress.com](http://www.ssopress.com)

#### The Future Belongs To Ghosts #6

Under the pretense of visually representing the “ghosts” of hardcore’s vibrant past within the stale framework of its present, Terence Hannum has Xeroxed altered video stills of Lightning Bolt, Against Me!, Converge, Cattle Decapitation, and other bands that to him, are apparently the genre’s saving grace. The visuals are distorted and abstract, often looking more like kindergarten finger paintings than haunting punks in pixelated disguise. I’m trying to be nice, but both the concept and coupled graphics are too ludicrous to endure. (BM)

[No price given], The Future Belongs To Ghosts c/o Terence Hannum, PO Box 220651 Chicago, IL 60622

#### Green Anarchy #21

Incredibly informative long-running “anti-civilization journal” steps back from the recent thematic issues for an odds-and-ends collection. Articles include diatribes against modern feminism, the holiday season, Food Not Bombs, the evolutionary concept of civilization, the futility of politics, and the anti-modernism movement in Bolivia (among others). Don’t forget the letters section, extensive calendar of international resistance activities, “rewilding” how-to (this time on the benefits of killing and skinning your own meat, which reads like a Cabela’s catalog), and the online distro. If you’re going to live a cliche—and green anarchy’s as good as any—you might as well learn from the best. (AM)

\$4 US, \$5 Canada, \$6 Europe, \$7 World, FTP, PO Box 11331, Eugene OR 97440, [www.greenanarchy.org](http://www.greenanarchy.org)

#### Here Be Dragons #9

The “Punk Over 30” issue of Here Be Dragons is full of loosely constructed, yet oddly inspiring, pieces relating to growing older in what is predominantly considered a youth based culture. Home ownership, coping with loss, veganism, marriage, and archived bands are all lightly examined. Sure, there are some clichés in the mix, but I’m sure a good amount of PP readers would be able to find points of relation and humor in the zine. (BM)

[No price given], Here Be Dragons c/o Mike Roth, PO Box 8131, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

#### The Inner Swine Vol. 11 #4

Jeff Somer’s writing has always struck me as the literary equivalent of American beer: completely aware of its limitations and somehow able to ignore them. While

referencing his lack of writing ability and perpetual drunkenness (and resulting pantslessness) every other page, Jeff’s material lampoons the stereotypical self-absorbed zinester while delivering insightful criticism. This issue of TIS focuses on futility: of sacrificing self-interest for the larger good (revolution is ultimately a zero-sum game), of attempting to preserve his writing for posterity (those disks won’t always be readable), of adequately learning anything new (one can never learn enough), of exercising (that beer gut will always come back), of making New Year’s Resolutions, and of attempting to fix anything ever (it will always fall apart again). While tongue-in-cheek nihilism is always good for more than a few laughs, Jeff’s extreme approach here demonstrates that—eh, I no longer care. Fuck it. (AM)

\$2, Jeff Somers, PO Box 3024 Hoboken NJ 07030, [www.innerswine.com](http://www.innerswine.com)

#### Lipgloss #1

An earnest mishmash of typical fare, Lipgloss contains an interview with Found Magazine, some long and occasionally boring stories, interviews with bands, strange comics, and columns. There are some really great moments here, not to mention an exceptional layout. Nevertheless, I can’t help but feel that so many zines would be so much better the minute they got away from a cookie-cutter format of features. The greatest zines have always been the anomalies. Why format it like a magazine? Be unique. (JB)

[www.lipglosszine.com](http://www.lipglosszine.com)

#### Looking and Other Stories

This collection of disconnected short stories explores unexpected moments through the eyes of different narrators: a boyfriend overdoses on moving day, a confused teenager contemplates her father’s remarriage, a yuppie tries to get over his mother’s death by searching for his youth through beer, and a widow reminisces about a missed opportunity before life took her girlhood. Each vignette highlights the open-ended ambiguity of life’s curveballs. Melissa’s characters recognize that there are no tidy answers, although that doesn’t stop them from searching. The detailed stories grant the reader a level of abstraction, while Melissa’s laconic writing style highlights the mundanity of catastrophe. Perfect-bound with beautiful pen-and-ink illustrations and a screen-printed cover, this zine looks as well as it reads. (AM)

\$5, Melissa Klein, Owl House 3288 21st St #79 San Francisco CA 94110

#### Oh No! The Robot #7

There’s something about day-in-the-life narratives that I usually find boring. Perhaps the exploration of minu-

tiae? Or the focus on a single viewpoint? ONTR #7 escapes both of these: Chris’s story follows three friends through the course of a single day’s events, avoiding boring details while expounding on the challenges (benefits?) of living slightly outside of the mainstream. Here’s what happens, in order: car accident, massive painkillers, hangover (including diarrhea), washing down painkillers with whiskey, trading a car for a bike, getting high, losing the bike, getting high again, delivering pizzas, another car accident, petty theft, drug-induced pants-shitting, and another hangover (again including diarrhea). Chris perpetuates the drunken punk stereotype, and it’s not as glamorous as it sounds, but if there were this much adventure in my life I wouldn’t have time to write a zine about it. (AM)

\$2, Chris Morin, 829 Main St. Saskatoon SK S7H 0K2 Canada, [www.ohnotherobot.com](http://www.ohnotherobot.com)

#### Reglar Wiglar #21

Included in this issue of Reglar Wiglar are interviews with Joe Shithead (DOA), Lying In States, the Hold Steady and the Peelers, as well as an article featuring Gary Panter, which, article-wise, is the standout of the group. The wry self-deprecation of Reglar Wiglar makes the standardized elements of music/arts magazines worth reading, for example, haiku record reviews, American Idol judges as fictitious guest reviewers, poetry (“The Ironic Mustache Of Wicker Park”), and the ridiculous, inconsequential featurette piece “Fruitless Internet Searches.” (AJA)

\$3ppd, 1658 N Milwaukee, #45, Chicago, IL 60647, [reglarwiglar.com](http://reglarwiglar.com)

#### The Rise and Fall #6

This issue is a punk archivist’s dream: an extensive interview with ‘80s SST mainstays Saccharine Trust, an alternately humorous and elegiac remembrance of the Vandals’ recently deceased frontman Stevo, Mike Watt’s remembrance of the Big Boys’ singer Biscuit, and a brief interview with Ian Mackaye about the Evens. A full-page comic by punk cartoonist Brian Walsby celebrates punk rock moments past with panels recalling momentous shows put on by Black Flag, the Meat Puppets, and the Minutemen, among others. And a full-page photo comic instructional hilariously showcases proper skanking form. (AC)

Free, PO Box 1794, San Pedro, CA 90733, [www.theriseandthefall.com](http://theriseandthefall.com)

#### Skyscraper #20

Skyscraper continues to redefine quality in the arena of independent music publications. Although they may lack some of the circulation and interest that a few of their over-saturated glossy peers garnish, Skyscraper’s writers and graphical staff stifle the competition. Issue 20 includes features on Animal Collective, Make Believe,

# ZINES

Lords, Pelican, Deerhoof, and more. There's also an informative Quicksand retrospective, and an *Odyssey*-length reviews section. This is what the blueprint of rock journalism should be founded on. (BM)  
\$5 US, \$8 International, PO Box 4432 Boulder, CO 80306

## Soup Kitchen #1

*Soup Kitchen* contains idealistic statements and visions of artists changing the world. Articles cover such subjects as Buddhism, putting on a play, the Celebrate People's History Poster Project, an art show by the Icarus Project, and more. There's great art in here too. It seems like the premise of this zine is to motivate readers and provide them with a springboard for their own ideas. I believe it succeeds nicely! (JB)  
\$2, World in Trouble PO Box 14007 Minneapolis, MN 55414

## Ugly Planet #3

Music zines often fail by poking moronic musicians with imbecilic questions (for example, Q: "What is your favorite color?" A: "My publicist says buy my new album" . . . ad nauseum), and I'd rather watch the class jock sing the praises of why pizza is awesome. *Ugly Planet*, on the other hand, broadsides the obscure with challenging and probing questions, offering a dense block of consistently solid interviews with fascinating subjects. Even with little interest in the interviewee, I can be guaranteed a good read. This issue covers Naomi Klein, Lydia Lunch, Ice-T, Jello Biafra, Jarboe, AK Press' Ramsey Kanaan, Le Tigre, and many others. Oh, and there's some solid reviews, too. (VC)

"Free to Punk Planet readers, just send \$2 to cover postage," PO Box 205, New York, NY 10012, [www.uglyplanet.com](http://www.uglyplanet.com)

## Welcome to Flavor Country #5

In Welcome to Flavor Country, Kurt expresses that he may want to get married but is unsure it'll happen due to his Christianity and interest in zines and punk rock. Continuing in this confessional style, the zine closes out with a bit of poetry. If you want to read about someone's mild personal turmoil and how Jesus is portrayed as white on television, this zine might be quite great for you. (JB)

Donations, Kurt Morris 835 Ashland Ave #4, South Bend, IN 46616

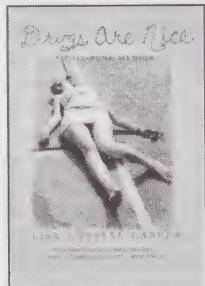
## The Yellow Rake, Vol. 2, #2

One of the problems with niche culture is that it's so self-referential that anything outside the parameter is rendered irrelevant. Unless you are purposefully ironic, then you're being esoteric. And that's about as daring as you get. While often very funny, the collection of rants in *The Yellow Rake* is a clear document of how hipsters expound on asinine topics like the scene, self-congratulating apathy, offbeat fiction, and petty jabs at yuppies, anarchists, other hipsters, and their families. They naively struggle with their own privileged decadence, and it's about as interesting as watching snails fuck themselves. That being said, I'm sure these folks are a total hoot to pound PBRs with. (VC)

[No price given], Brian Polk, PO Box 181024, Denver, CO 80218, [www.theyellowrake.com](http://www.theyellowrake.com)

# BOOKS

Edited by Joe Meno



### Drugs Are Nice: A Post-Punk Memoir

Lisa Crystal Carver

Soft Skull Press

Lisa Carver, best known for her zine, *Rollerderby*, pens an amazingly dramatic, well-written memoir with this new Soft Skull release. The story begins with the news that Laura's father will be heading off to prison and then follows her teenage exploits in the punk scene, developing a lifelong relationship with a girl she meets named Rachel, then the plot winds through Lisa's young adulthood where she becomes a

prostitute and soon she finds herself married to French musician Jean Louis Costes, all before giving birth to a baby, Wolf, who suffers from a chromosomal deletion. Carver leaps from one harrowing moment to the next, each more dizzying, each more disturbing, the prose all written in terse, energetic present tense. Lines like "I'm standing in Jeff's basement, from which he deals drugs, not knowing what to do with my hands" and "Paris, much like my husband, is old and dirty" pack a real wallop because of this great immediacy but what the writing lacks (and the memoir as a whole) is any sense of narrative distance. Carver is both the observer/narrator of the world she is describing and also the star, and she is very, very aware of being the star. Because of this, there are moments where the story suffers, where deeper questions of why Lisa the character does what she does, like hooking up with the thuggish and rumored Nazi, Boyd Rice, whom she has her child with. Like so many other memoirs written by authors still in the middle of their lives—a style of storytelling which now seems to be a genre all its own, blending memory, fact, and fiction—Carver's memoir, told as it is happening right now, lacks that profound and necessary element—serious introspection—that informs the writing of great memoirists like George Orwell and Joan Didion. In the end, *Drugs Are Nice* is breakneck storytelling, a truly memorable and harrowing read. —Joe Meno

### On Making Stuff & Doing Things: A Collection of DIY Guides to Doing Just About Everything

Compiled by Kyle Bravo

I'm not crafty. I don't cook, (aside from various dishes involving melted cheese,) I don't sew, or keep a garden. So if you're anything like me, Kyle Bravo's book, *Making Stuff & Doing Things: A Collection of DIY Guides to Doing Just About Everything* is something you're going to want to pick up. It is just as the title suggests—a collection of "how-to's" for making or doing, well, just about everything. The book is divided into sections such as "Health and Body," "Arts and Crafts," or "Food and Drink," and the end results range from the more functional to the just plain fun. In one sitting, for instance, the

reader can learn how to make their own toothpaste, fix a broken toilet, make a quill pen, cure a yeast infection, make a dildo, butt plug, or fitted A-line skirt. (My personal favorite, however, is a guide entitled, "For Females That Don't Know Shit About Cars But Want To"). Bravo's book is cleverly put together. Most of the guides are accompanied by sketches and illustrations, and each take on a friendly, conversational tone. In short, Bravo's book is handy for when you're in a pinch, or when you just feel like learning something new. (Emily Schambray)

Microcosm Publishing

### Shoot the Buffalo

Matt Briggs

Matt Briggs' latest novel, from the elusive but well-

thought-of subscription-based book publishing company Clear Cut Press in Astoria, OR, relates a sorrow so deep it's barely mentioned in the book. After an accident leaves one sibling dead and another feeling responsible, a Pacific Northwest family struggles with drug abuse, mental illness, and flat-out neglect. No character's needs are ever met, no character's life gains stability or momentum, and no character, at any point, resembles anything we consider normal, healthy, or happy. Yet the tale is still uplifting, if only in the same way that, after surviving another dreary, rainy, unchanging winter, residents of the Snoqualmie River Valley feel a vague hope in the fact that they are still alive. (Anne Elizabeth Moore)

Clear Cut Press [www.clearcutpress.com](http://www.clearcutpress.com)

### Where Handstands Surprise Us:

### The Best of the Bean Street Reading Series

Various Authors

I'll admit that the idea of perusing a collection of short stories and poetry from a now-defunct coffee shop reading series didn't exactly tickle my pickle. That was until I realized, around page two, that these kids actually have something to say. *Where Handstands Surprise Us* is an unexpectedly coherent and creative collection of Midwestern adolescent angst. Written mostly by college students, this colorful collage of social, political, and personal stories blazes with the raw energy only young, inspired artists can afford. The book opens with a recipe for a turkey sandwich and moves jarringly through the collective psyche of the Bean Street Cafe's resident artists. It hurls at you a mishmash of anger, regret, and disillusionment, dipped in a sugary coating of humor, and dares you to move out of the way. Stories that explore the troubled life of a chipmaker, God's thoughts on war, the gloom of New Years, and pimping out a '98 Buick, allow the reader to journey through the passionately-wallpapered hallways of twenty-something Indiana. This volume also includes a short by Al Burian, and like his ongoing zine, *Burn Collector*, and his *Punk Planet* column, this story offers humor and pathos in a quick, punchy dose. I now agree with Mickey Hess, the creator of the Bean Street series, "This is some kickass stuff and I think you'll like it." (Jeremy Stoltz)

# COMICS

About our reviews: We review independently produced comics. It's true. We do it for the love of reading them and for the love of writing about them. We don't care whether or not you buy them based on our reviews, but we will make every effort to give you what information we can about the comics we review that are available for sale. We review comics that are put out by the small publishing houses, comics that are put out by small art collectives, and comics that are put out by individuals. We'll try to review every comic we get in-house, but sometimes that's just not possible. Sorry.

This issue's reviewers: Daphne Adair (DA), Chris Burkhalter (CB), Ari Charney (AC), Hatuey Diaz (HD). Christa Donner (CD), Lisa Groshong (LG) Edited by Laura Pearson (LP)



## The Ticking

Renee French's latest graphic novel may be utterly bizarre, but, like her earlier work, it's nevertheless tinged with an unmistakable sweetness. Her fuzzy pencil renderings create the sort of soft inviting lines that alternately lull the reader into an innocent land of children's book fairy tales, and then jar their senses with depictions of hideous scars. *The Ticking* starts off with a father discovering that his newborn son, Edison Steelhead, shares his unique facial deformity. He clearly knows the pain that awaits

Edison in the normal world and so retreats to a lonely island to quietly raise him unfettered by the glare of critical eyes. Despite this level of consideration for Edison's feelings, the father seems to be largely aloof toward his son. Edison attempts to kindle a bond by sharing the fruits of his inquisitive nature: careful sketches of insects, tools, and other items in the world around him, even a detailed and numbered diagram of toilet seat detritus. As the story progresses, Edison finds clues to his father's emotional past, one that mirrors Edison's own grappling with his physical deformity. Like Chester Brown, French packs more heart-rending emotion and anxiety into a single comic panel than most cartoonists can pack into an entire page. She easily ranks among the top talents in the comics world, and this work, as well as all of her previous collections, is well worth seeking out. (AC)

\$19.95, Renee French, Top Shelf Comix, [www.topshelfcomix.com](http://www.topshelfcomix.com), ISBN 1-891830-70-8

## Barrelhouse #1: Confessions of a Juvenile Liquor Pig

Normally, art about alcohol makes me as queasy as the smell of tequila; it tends toward the boring, self-serving, and stupid. But R Lee's memoir-style writing is the perfect combination of snappy, funny lines and moments of absolute recognition, as in, "Oh my god, it's so crazy that he did that" to "Oh my god, that's exactly what I did." Dug Belan's clear drawings feature google-eyed characters that amplify the subject matter. What makes this material truly zing is Lee and Belan's attention to detail—from an amazingly accurate drawing of what a hangover feels like to various drinks the teenage narrator memorized from *The Bartender's Bible*. Short and ultimately sad, but like the narrator's own budding addiction, it left me thirsty for more. (LG)

\$2, R. Lee, PO Box 1421, Oshkosh WI 54903  
**Blurred Vision: New Narrative Art**

In this compilation from Blurred Books, the comics with better drawing, line, perspective and pattern tend to differ from the comics with compelling narrative. Picking up this book is a good way of encountering a bunch of comics at once, although most excerpts don't surpass the quality of your average self-published comic art, and it's more fun to choose your own collection of one-

offs than to try to enjoy someone else's. Since comics are one area where you can afford to do that, the purpose of this compilation is questionable. Eleven pages are about nine pages too many to explore imaginative derivations of "cartooning symbology" (the squiggly lines drawn around a character's head to depict confusion, for example), leaving the reader with the feeling that these artists were given too long at the open mic. (DA)

Various Artists, Blurred Books, 40 Lispenard St., New York, NY 10013, [www.blurredbooks.com](http://www.blurredbooks.com), ISBN 0-9771612-1-8

## Conversation #2

Why make comics? A-listers Jeffrey Brown and James Kochalka attempt some answers to that question in this dialogue-as-minicomic peculiarity. I can't say their musings go anywhere remarkable (at the book's end, Kochalka jokingly concedes, "I'm pretty sure this book sucks"), but fans of these artists' work may appreciate the glimpse into what makes them tick. (CB)

\$4.95, Jeffrey Brown and James Kochalka, Top Shelf Productions, PO Box 1282 Marietta, GA 30061-1282, [www.topshelfcomix.com](http://www.topshelfcomix.com)

## Crosston #1 and #2

It is very rare to come across comics this well-written and graphically strong. A little like Dan Clowes, but with more small-town hipster drama and less self-loathing,

these comics are alternately witty, sad, and brilliant. Using trading card-esque frames to introduce new scenes told from the viewpoint of a different character, issue #1 weaves a web of gossip to tell the story behind a former cool kid's homecoming, while issue #2 mixes local murder legend with broken keys, horror comics, and hardware store employees on acid. Great stuff. (CD)

\$3, J. Kelly, Self-published, 829 Starkweather, Cleveland, OH 44113

## The Crosston Daily Vol. 1 #1-3; Vol. 2 #1-2

A supplement to the regular Crosston comic, these books are little self-contained stories usually focusing on one specific character. The inhabitants of Crosston are your usual cast of disaffected twenty-somethings doing what they do: going to thrift stores, talking to bums, dumpster diving. It's all meant to feel very real but ends up coming off as very calculated, especially when the writing starts to trip into cheese territory. The writing is at its best when humorous, and Kelly does have a gift for fairly natural sounding dialogue. Add to that some great art, and you have yourself a fine read. (HD)

\$0.50-\$2, Self-published, 829 Starkweather Cleveland, OH 44113

## Cut Flowers

One day, one night—nearing the end of the holy days of college (which seems it will never arrive)—misery overtakes you. You try everything to slake it, to focus and forget the misery, but you keep walking in the same circles. For a minute—a drunken minute—you think you're going to be happy. Then you wake up the next morning, and the stretch of days in front of you is merciless... Palermo's main character, Hank, could be an annoying rich kid, playing a broke kid in the comics, and Fay could be the love of his life, or maybe she's just more interesting than any of the other women around. We don't hear from any other art students in the story, so it's impossible for the reader to get a grasp at why Hank has become so isolated and miserable. This well-illustrated story—the author has command of modern comic style—deserves higher production quality (if only a color wrap on the black and white pages) and promises more from the author in time. Presently, however, *Cut Flowers* occasionally wanders off into the tall grass without reward. Detachment keeps away any sense of danger, excitement, sexual tension, or any of the other magical acts of narrative text that might hold sway over the reader's imagination and leave us wanting more. (DA)

\$5, Pat Palermo, [printedmatter.org](http://printedmatter.org) or [usscatastrophe.com](http://usscatastrophe.com)

## The Daily Compulsion #3

I can tell you I wasn't expecting much from this book, what with its Yu-Gi-Oh-esque cover and all. But once I

started reading, I couldn't stop laughing. *The Compulsion* isn't pretending to be anything it's not: it's stupid stories about getting drunk and being stupid, but therein lie the charm. The art does its job and Rice's comedic timing and pacing are spot-on. If you're looking for something to read on the bus to make you feel better about what an ass you made of yourself the night before, *The Daily Compulsion* is the book for you. (HD)

\$1, Nathan Rice, Self-published, PO Box 292 Portland ME 04112, [bitch3742@hotmail.com](mailto:bitch3742@hotmail.com)

## Everyman, Vol. 1: Be The People

A declaration on its back cover states: "Everyman seeks not to point the finger of blame... but to point the way back to the American Dream in which all our voices matter." To that end, the book's creators present a politico-drama in which a reprehensible "President Birch" tries to steal the election in a diabolical scheme to run an oil pipeline through Afghanistan. But one bestselling author, one social engineer, one maverick White House aide, and—I kid you not—a disillusioned working class team up to "culture jam" the country free of Birch's tyrannical stranglehold. Along the way, they show a fed-up America that a moderate left agenda and a little nonpartisan compromise is the perfect cure for ineffectual government bureaucracy. Let's just say this book's political insights struck this reviewer as a bit short of a revelation. (CB)

\$6, Dan Goldman, Steven Goldman, and Joe Bucco, FWD Books, [everyman.fwdbooks.com](http://everyman.fwdbooks.com), ISBN 0-9759152-0-7

## Golden Boy

While this book seems to have its heart in the right place, it just doesn't come together in the right way. In *Golden Boy*, you'll encounter one Cole Parker, a washed-up boxer who decides to turn over a new leaf. The problem is not with the story, which is pretty predictable, but with the often confusing pacing and art. For instance, it took a couple of rereads for me to realize that the beginning of the first chapter was a flashback. Mistakes in the art also prove distracting. For example, in one panel a guy is chipping ice off his car, but in the previous panel there is no visible ice, or even snow, on or around the car. Or, in another instance, a character punches someone in the face, and rather than snapping in the same direction as the punch, the person's head snaps against the punch. It just makes me wish more thought was put into this work. (HD)

\$14.95, Max Riffner, Self-published, [www.maxriffner.com](http://www.maxriffner.com)

## Haunted Mansion #1

Why any self-respecting indie artist create comics "inspired" by the Haunted Mansion ride at Disneyworld—and here, Eric Jones, Jon Hastings, Roman Dirge, Black Olive, DW Frydenall, Mike Moss, and Brian Blewett do—is

# COMICS

beyond me, and the resulting book is indeed chilling, just not for reasons the editors intended. (CD)  
\$2.95, edited by Jennifer de Guzman, SLG Publishing, PO Box 26427, San Jose, CA 95159-6427, ISBN 1-59362-029-2

## Lenore #12

For the uninitiated, *Lenore* is a comic about the adventures of a slightly unhinged 10-year-old zombie girl. The comic is full of cynical, absurdist humor and some very goth art. It's no wonder that this is one of the most popular comics with the teenage/fishnet-wearing set. Indeed, these sorts of fans follow *Lenore*, as well as its artist, in an almost fanatical way. The new issue is more of the same, which isn't really a bad thing. Dirge has a formula, and he does it very well. (HD)  
\$2.95, Roman Dirge, Slave Labor, [www.slgpublishing.com](http://www.slgpublishing.com)

## Life is Good

Sacha Ecker's comic reminds me of all the times in college I stood and nodded in the hopes that people would think I "got it" when actually I had no freaking clue. A couple of the single-panel comics in this booklet are definitely funny on purpose, but the rest of the primitive drawings are obtuse, ironic, or just plain bizarre. While the drawing style is the type of BiC-pen doodles the Unabomber kid did on his jeans in study hall, the comics would also make good T-shirts, especially for wearing to parties full of people cooler than I am. (LG)  
[No price given], Sacha Ecker, [www.sachaecker.com](http://www.sachaecker.com)

## Lost Dogs

*Lost Dogs* is a tear-jerking comic that chronicles a gentle giant who leaves his idyllic countryside home with his wife and daughter. The family travels to the big city, only to encounter tragedy that destroys even the loyal family dog. Jeff Lemire's black and white drawings use bold, paintbrush-type lines to capture the sweeping emotion of the storyline. Unfortunately, *Lost Dogs* begins to feel manipulative when the spot red, once reserved for the giant's striped shirt, becomes splatters of blood that splash across nearly every page. (LG)  
\$10, Jeff Lemire, Ashtray Press, 74 Northumberland St., Toronto Canada, M5H 1R3; [www.ashtraypress.com](http://www.ashtraypress.com)

## Lucifer's Garden of Verses, Vol. 3: The Student

Attempting to tackle issues of race and art-world success, this book combines the story of Faust with that of a Basquiat-esque black artist struggling to make his way in the New York art scene. Said artist sells his soul to the devil/fictional white art critic Acquinetta Scapinelli in exchange for art-world status, and things really start to get ugly. Despite frequent allusions to famous artwork, Tooks' critique of the art world comes off as simplistic and fairly clueless. Worse yet, his main character is a crude caricature of the black male artist, unable to control his own lust for wealth, power, and nookie. Yikes. (CD)  
Lance Tooks, NBM Comics Lit, 555 8<sup>th</sup> Ave, Suite 1202, New York, NY 10018, ISBN 1-56163-446-8

## Marlene

If you're looking for a good supernatural mystery, look somewhere else. If you're looking for lots of nudity and a paper-thin plot, you've come to the right place. At least the art's good. (HD)  
\$3.95, Peter Snejbjerg, Slave Labor, [www.slgpublishing.com](http://www.slgpublishing.com)

## Only: Flying Lessons

*Only* embodies a nearly pure interpretation of the graphic novel: rarely does the actual written word interrupt the symbol-heavy narrative. Yet the reliance

on thought balloons, punctuation, and other symbols promote a sense of "reading," and in *Flying Lessons*, Owl and his worm buddy draw letters and visit Raccoon's general store to use reference books that reveal, through text, the identity of the mysterious flying squirrel. There's something disingenuous about the *Owl* series—like a parent trying to sneak vitamins into dessert. The stories offer a kind of parental help with the words, and the books come across as a cross between *The Illustrated Classics* (*Moby Dick* in comic book format) and *Chick Tracts* (Christian comics that depict Catholics, multi-faith theologians, and trick-or-treaters as devil-worshippers). However arduous the setup, *Flying Lessons* finally pays off with flight, and—as the author releases the reader into single frame pages—the headache-inducing density relaxes, and the finale is more enjoyable than the rest of the story. I'd keep *Owl* around for reluctant readers or young children learning English as a second language, but older readers will be bored and younger readers confused. (DA)  
\$10, Andy Runyon, Top Shelf Comix, [www.topshelfcomix.com](http://www.topshelfcomix.com)

## Styx Taxi: As Above, So Below

*Styx Taxi* Service grants the recently departed a two-hour trip to anywhere they wanna go, before ferrying them to the afterlife. This comic presents two such stories from the drivers' perspective. Also included are two prose stories about people trying to get by in a dismal future New York with a homeless population of 12%. (CB)  
\$5, FWD Books, [www.styxtaxi.fwdbooks.com](http://www.styxtaxi.fwdbooks.com)

## Surrogates #2, #3

In a dystopian but not-so-distant future, the majority of the Western World conduct their lives by operating artificial substitute bodies from the safety of home. When a series of terrorist attacks threaten this practice, Lt. Harvey Greer's suspicions turn to the anti-surrogate followers of a charismatic cult leader who calls himself The Prophet. Based on the two issues I've read, it's clear that writer Venditti has taken pains to explore the many and varied ramifications of this promising premise. Meanwhile, Weldele's pencils impressively straddle superhero gleam and raw schematic. It's encouraging (and rare) to see an indie succeed this seamlessly in genre territory so dominated by mainstream comic publishing. (CB)  
\$2.95, Robert Venditti and Brett Weldele, Top Shelf Productions, PO Box 1282 Marietta, GA 30061-1282, [www.topshelfcomix.com](http://www.topshelfcomix.com)

## Tommy Gun: Fierce Dyke Adventures #12 & #13

These brief black and white comic zines offer mostly tired satirical riffs on Republicans and the Bush Administration: Bush as the devil, Republicans as Nazis, etc. While this type of work is clearly cathartic for the cartoonist, there's such an excess of this sort of output these days that yet another iteration of it barely entertains. One mild exception to this is when the dykes head to a gun show and one, in particular, envisions herself decked out with all sorts of menacing firepower, finally walking off with a "surface to air missile with launcher." The simple, cutely rendered spiky-haired punks are stylistically well-suited for satire, and the stark contrast between foreground and background help the artwork pop out at the reader. In fact, the cartoonist's overall style lends itself well to humorous content. And a couple of shorter pieces showcase the cartoonist's true comedic abilities when she finally shifts away from political satire. "Heart Break Gwen" veers from a tender lament of Gwen Stefani's career arc to a series of madcap efforts to

defile and ultimately pulverize her latest solo album, yet nevertheless concluding: "I knew you'd break my heart one day Gwen! But you're still hot!!" (AC)  
\$1 plus postage, [dvyyt@hotmail.com](mailto:dvyyt@hotmail.com)

## The Truth is Ridiculous

Open up this book, and the first thing that hits you are the words, "a very crude comic." And it's true: the art is very crude. Not bad but lazy. Nevertheless, good comics don't always contain good drawing, and this is one of the best minicomics I've read all year. The stories are random—like flipping through somebody's sketchbook—but are full of humor and heart. In one story, the main character spills a can of soda but is too lazy to clean it up. She gets paranoid about ants so instead just sprays the can with Raid. I don't mind the looseness of the art, but occasionally the scanning of the drawings is so bad that it becomes difficult to read. This is a book I would love to see redone with a little more care. If you can get past the grime, you're in for a great read. (HD)  
[No price given], Amy Beth Eisenberg, Self-published, 8 Harriman's Keep Irvington NY 10533, [redtoe8135@aol.com](mailto:redtoe8135@aol.com)

## Unsafe for All Ages: Comic Stories for Adults Only

The title and cover of this comic, which depicts two guys groping in a coat closet, had me anticipating some hot gay sex. Alas, aside from Justin Hall's "Birthday Fuck," the 12 comics in this collection revolve around fully clothed relationships or giants and spacemen waving around ridiculously huge penises. While I enjoyed the clever Viagra-themed episode of "HIV+ Me," overall, this collection seemed a little too safe. (LG)  
\$8, [prismcomics.org](http://prismcomics.org)

## Violet Miranda, Girl Pirate #2

The second issue from a serial project intended to fill the void for teenage girls, *Violet Miranda* tells the tale of two girl-pirates in training. That the book is based on a true story makes things more interesting but also a little complicated when it comes to their interactions with the adult male pirates they've been kidnapped by. *Miranda* also feels a little limited by historical fact in its storytelling scope. This is a fine enough thing to give to the teenager in your life but not compelling enough to make me want to pick up another issue. (CD)  
\$4, Kiss Machine, [www.kissmachine.org](http://www.kissmachine.org)

## The Walking Dead, Vol. 4: The Heart's Desire

This latest collection of the comic series *The Walking Dead* somewhat redeems its mainstream escapist fantasy roots with relentless gore. When the main characters aren't embroiled in the sort of tiresome action flick melodramas about who gets to be the leader, etc., they hack and shoot apart at half-decayed zombies. The black, white, and gray-toned imagery sets an appropriately macabre atmosphere. This volume finds the main characters hunkered down behind the protective barriers of a prison and attempting to resurrect some semblance of normalcy even as an endless mass of zombies stand and moan at them through the chain-link fence surrounding the prison. (AC)  
\$12.99, Robert Kirkman & Charlie Adlard, Image Comics, [www.imagecomics.com](http://www.imagecomics.com), ISBN 1-58240-530-1

## World War 3 Illustrated #36

This venerable political comics journal likely hasn't enjoyed such a bounty of potential lampoons since the Reagan years. But while the various satirical efforts against the Bushes, Cheneys, Wolfowitzes, Rumsfelds, and Republicans, in general, are limp fare, a couple of

more journalistic endeavors deserve attention. "War is Hell," by Penny Allen, is a photo comic apparently culled from the candid personal video that a US soldier recorded while in Iraq. The writer struck up a conversation with the keyed-up soldier while sitting next to him on a plane, and supposedly developed a sufficient enough bond with him that he allowed her to share his footage with the world. The writer reconstructs the soldier's matter-of-fact narration of several unbelievably graphic events, including the exploded remains of a suicide bomber, another insurgent picked off by a sniper, and what appears to be a US soldier's body following an encounter with an IED. And the indomitable Joe Sacco offers more of his comics journalism, documenting his time with a Mobile Assault Platoon in the piece "Complacency Kills." While Sacco occasionally allows his perspective to seep into the story, he's masterful at offering a distanced, objective view of soldiers as they go about their mundane and deadly routines. (AO)  
\$5, PO Box 20777, Tompkins Square Station, New York, NY, 10009, [www.worldwar3illustrated.org](http://www.worldwar3illustrated.org)

## Y? Part one: Burnt Violet

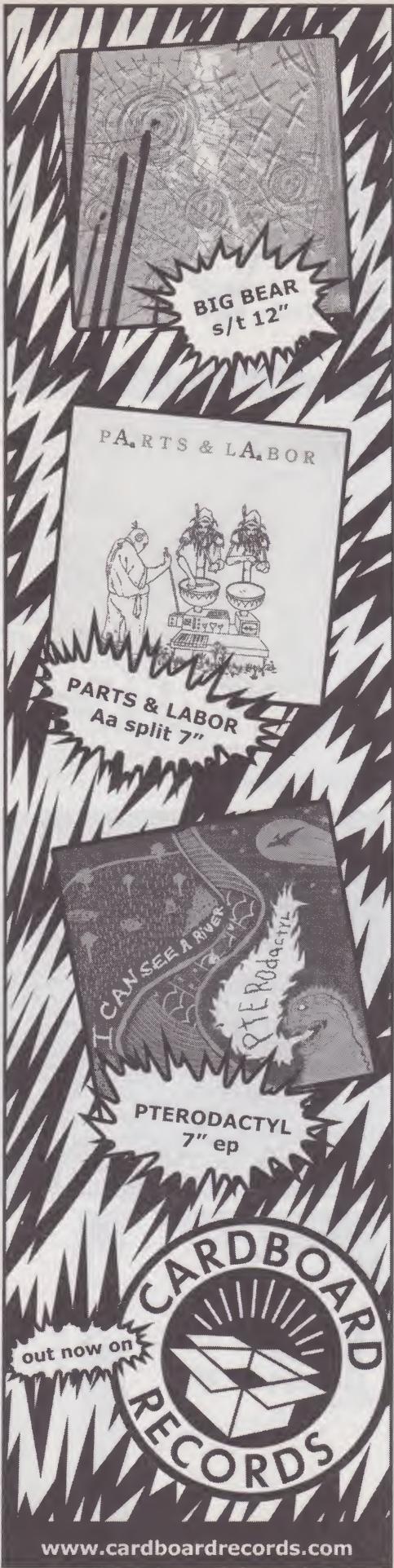
In C Burbidge's anthro comic *Y?*, a gang of cats play out the early days of a relationship between an experienced woman and a seemingly straight one. As Burbidge notes in her introduction, this is a first foray into story comics. As such, *Y?* often feels like a rough draft, with lackluster dialogue and an absence of conflict. The characters are drawn expressively but are sometimes so similar they're hard to tell apart, and the focus is often so tight it's impossible to understand. (LG)  
\$19.99, C Burbidge; [www.yquestionmark.com](http://www.yquestionmark.com), [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com)

## Your New Religion, Book 1

Put this well-crafted minicomic in your breast pocket, and it could save you from a boring party or any other time you find yourself in desperate need of non sequitur, though perhaps not from a speeding bullet. Four gods are presented within: the first a drunk to whom we pray with a Russian accent and honor by abstaining from mayonnaise. You get to pick from among the ludicrous yet biblical-sounding pronouncements—choose wisely, for you may win \$1 million or you may never enjoy a delicious burrito again (the sole pronunciation of the final, eponymous deity). (DA)  
\$2, Joe Sayers, Self-published, [www.jsayers.com](http://www.jsayers.com)

## Zed: Backstage Pass and Setting the Scene

Take Ziggy, add visual puns, groaners and typos, and subtract the eternal loneliness of the puffy figure, and you get Zed. Zed is a laundry dweller, a piece of dryer lint come to life, and lives in a classic newspaper-comic world of family and totally random next-door neighbors—two old men who used to be in vaudeville. Zed's creation brings up many questions: why did anyone ever like *Garfield*? Is it possible that Duane Abel is mentally retarded and this is a project to provide a living for retarded cartoonists? (Please note this reviewer is against using the word "retarded" as an insult and seriously considered this possibility, which does not appear to be the case.) Or is he just a cranky old man with an axe to grind against the modern world? We'll never know the answer to the first question, but if *Garfield* has fans, so must Zed. Occasional typos and moments when Abel accidentally transcends his own jokes—almost, until you realize it's another visual pun—add an unintended element of surprise to reading the work. (DA)  
\$4, Duane M. Abel, [www.corkeycomics.com](http://www.corkeycomics.com)



[www.cardboardrecords.com](http://www.cardboardrecords.com)

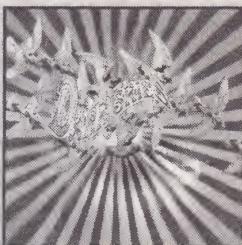


## Blanks Its - Happy Accidents

"...Mangled two finger chords...and a high-strung backbeat... Think of them as if the Urinals at their most agitated writing songs they'd like to hear the Monkees cove..." - Smashing Transistors

## Dark Skies - s/t

...stomp and twist their throttling, heavy soul stylings through channels of Groundhogs and the MC5 - but burgeon in the hydroponic northwest heat of Dead Moon and the Wipers.



## Original Three - Dealt a Losin Hand

Lead by Ian of the Black Lips the Original Three play down tempo garage punk. Recorded by Alicja Trout (Lost Sounds/MouseRocket) with a guest appearance by Jay Reatard (Reatards/Lost Sounds)



## Tokyo Electron - s/t

This record is chock full of that blown out trash punk sound that Ryan (Reatards, Digital Leather) has perfected over the years. TE has quickly turned into one of his best and most sought out bands to date



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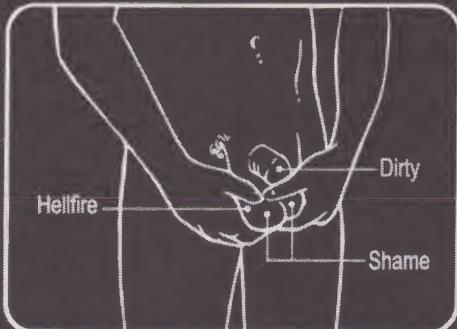


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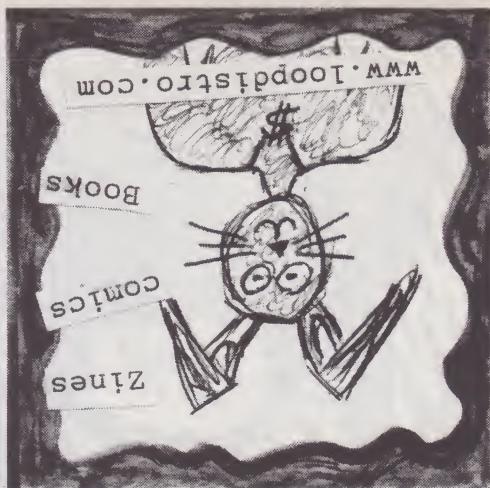
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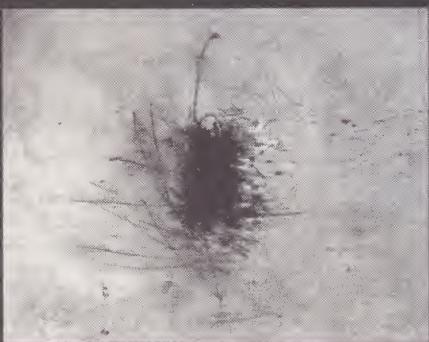
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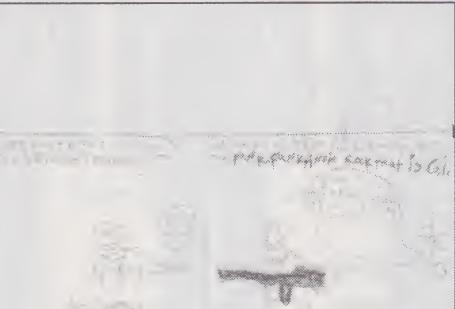
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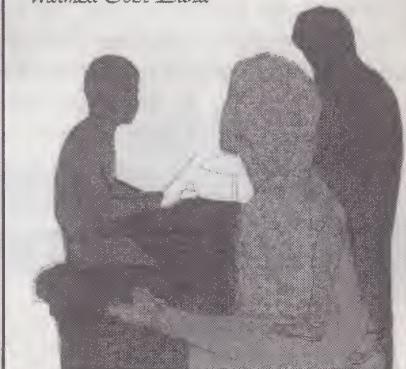
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# see also

Where to find more information about this issue's features.

## interviewed this issue:

### Propagandhi

The website for the voluntary human extinction movement has MP3s, FAQs, and a vast list of resources to improve your mind: [www.propagandhi.com](http://www.propagandhi.com), or write to them care of Winnipeg, Canada. The G7 Welcoming Committee has *Potemkin City Limits available*: [www.g7welcomingcommittee.com](http://www.g7welcomingcommittee.com) or write PO Box 27006, C-360 Main Street, Winnipeg, MB, R3C 4T3, Canada. Interviewer John Malkin hosts a weekly radio program on Free Radio Santa Cruz: [www.freakradio.org](http://www.freakradio.org).

### Rat Patrol

Email [Johnny@rat-patrol.org](mailto:Johnny@rat-patrol.org) for a helpful starter kit, or look up the directions for makin' a tall bike on your own at [www.tallbike.net](http://www.tallbike.net).

### Shoplifting

Shoplifting's *Body Stories* just came out from Kill Rock Stars ([www.killrockstars.com](http://www.killrockstars.com)), and the band is on tour now. If you feel you have a problem with shoplifting, or know someone who does, this band is probably not going to help.

### Gina Frangello

*My Sister's Continent* is out now from Chiasmus Press. You can order it from Small Press Distributors or Amazon.com, or email the publisher: [contact@chiasmusmedia.net](mailto:contact@chiasmusmedia.net). *Other Voices* can be found online at [www.webdelsol.com/Other\\_Voices/](http://www.webdelsol.com/Other_Voices/).

### Death From Above 1979

Check the band's website for cool merch, videos, or record albums: [www.deathfromabove1979.com](http://www.deathfromabove1979.com).

### Julie Doucet

Dawn & Quarterly's *My Most Secret Desire* rerelease is out now: [www.drawnandquarterly.com](http://www.drawnandquarterly.com), or at your local independent bookseller. For more about her current art work, check the Dan Nadel interview in *The Drama*, which you can order via [www.thedrama.org](http://www.thedrama.org).

## articles in this issue:

### Coming Together

Support the work of the Common Ground collective by making a donation online at: [www.commongroundrelief.org](http://www.commongroundrelief.org). See more of

Christopher Cardinale's work in *World War 3 Illustrated* or at [www.christophercardinale.com](http://www.christophercardinale.com).

### For a Good Time . . .

Quick, go jot something in the stalls of your favorite potty and then document it at: [www.thewritingsonthestall.com](http://www.thewritingsonthestall.com). You'll be famous!

### Remembering the 1985 MOVE Bombing

The University of Chicago Press released a book in 1994 by Robin Wagner-Pacific called *Discourse and Destruction: The City of Philadelphia Versus MOVE*. Another book, in the Pamphlet Architecture series of critical investigations, by Johanna Saleh Dickson was published in 2002: *Pamphlet Architecture 23—MOVE: Sites of Trauma*.

### Legislating Weight Loss

Compare and contrast the FDA's website ([www.fda.gov](http://www.fda.gov)) with Phat Camp's ([www.morethanjust-phat.com](http://www.morethanjust-phat.com)) or just skip the formalities and order *Size Queen* online at [www.sizequeenzine.org](http://www.sizequeenzine.org).



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## GRACER

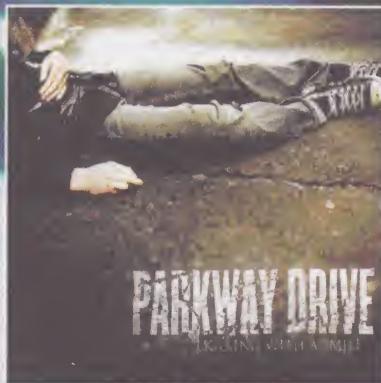
*Voices Travel*

REV135: CD



Out 6/6/06 on Revelation Records

With spacey guitars, tasteful keyboarding, and hard edged drumming, GRACER's debut *Voices Travel* brings an undeniable sense of emotion and feeling to the far-gone, "bought and sold" genre of indie rock. For fans of SENSE FIELD, SUNNY DAY REAL ESTATE and BRAND NEW.

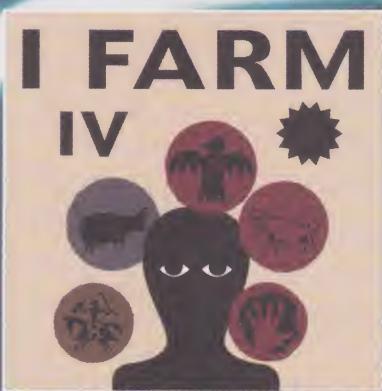


## PARKWAY DRIVE

*Killing With A Smile*

RES1045: CD

In May 2005 PARKWAY DRIVE headed to the USA to record their debut album with renowned metal producer and KILLSWITCH ENGAGE guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz (*Unearth*, *KILLSWITCH ENGAGE* and *FROM AUTUMN TO ASHES*). The result is *Killing With A Smile*, 11 tracks of pure rage, and without question PARKWAY DRIVE's finest hour. Swe-death riffs, punishing breakdowns, thick rhythms, mayhem inducing blastbeats and a technical precision that borders on frightening, PARKWAY DRIVE transcend cliched labels like "metalcore" with ease.



## I FARM

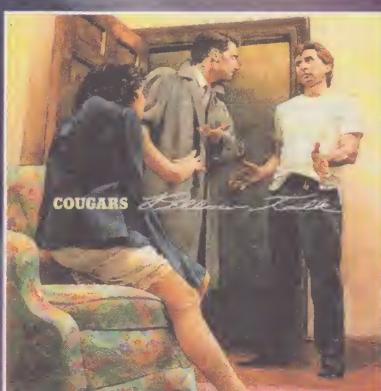
*IV*

GK119: CD



Out Now! on Go Kart Records

*I Farm*'s latest release, appropriately titled *IV*, is packed with enough twist, turns, melody, and speed to keep you guessing, while creating new pathways of thought to worlds only *I Farm* can conjure. *I Farm* has come full circle in the last decade. Stripped back down to a three piece, stronger than ever and ready to kill! *I Farm*'s *IV* also welcomes a new warrior to the mission, John Meredith of *SOMEDAY*. Produced at The Blasting Room, in Ft.Collins.CO, by Jason Livermore and Bill Stevenson of (*THE DESCENDENTS*, *ALL*, and *BLACK FLAG*).



## COUGARS

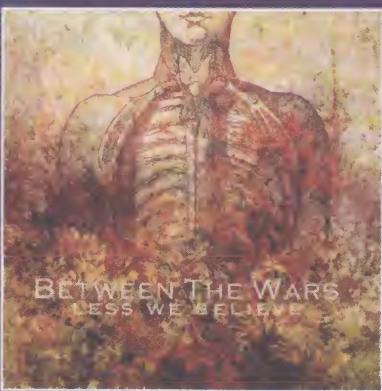
*Pillow Talk*

GK117: CD



Out Now! on Go Kart Records

"A rock band making rock music." That's how Chicago's COUGARS, if prodded, would describe what they are. With the helping hand of legendary recording engineer Steve Albini, COUGARS have essentially captured the blaring intensity of their live performances on analog tape for their second full length album, *Pillow Talk*. A monster of an album featuring ten brand new tracks, it is a testament to COUGARS unwavering raucous instinct.



## BETWEEN THE WARS

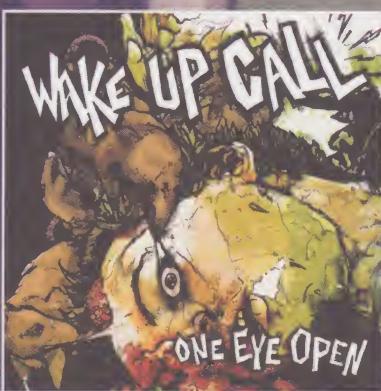
*Less We Believe*

TFR019: CDEP



Out Now! on Think Fast! Records

Featuring current ENSIGN frontman Tim Shaw, as well as former THURSDAY guitarist Bill Henderson, *BETWEEN THE WARS* is no stranger to the underground music scene. Blending influences from past and present hardcore acts like QUICKSAND and 108, *Less We Believe* features a unique sound that is a breath of fresh air in a scene that so often recycles the same three chords. *BETWEEN THE WARS* are crumbling the barricades in between hardcore, punk, and metal and *Less We Believe* is a record that's going to be talked about for years to come.



## WAKE UP CALL

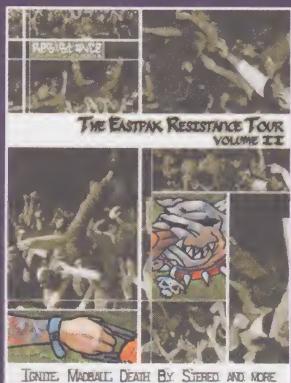
*One Eye Open*



TF018: CDEP/7"

Out Now! on Think Fast! Records

With simple and clean song structures, plenty of gang vocals, and solo hooks, *One Eye Open* captures everything needed to mark a flawless debut. The modern hardcore/punk influences driving the force behind *WAKE UP CALL* are easy to distinguish, yet the band has a style they can call their own, with a stand out vocal debut by Aaron Billion (easily comparable to UNDERDOG or WARZONE). Believe the hype.



## V/A

*The Eastpak*

*Resistance Tour*

*Volume 2*



ISCR893: DVD

Out Now! on I Scream Records

*The Resistance Tour* DVD series are among the biggest live compilations ever recorded and released in the history of the Hardcore scene. Volume number 2 features great bands such as MADBALL, IGNITE, DEATH BY STEREO, SWORN ENEMY and more.



## IRON AGE

*Constant Struggle*

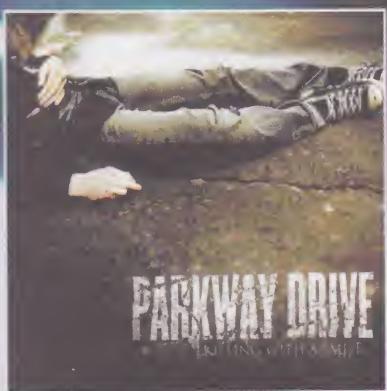


YB23: CD

Out Now on Youngblood Records

The hard-hitting debut from this Texas hardcore band! Taking cues from crossover acts from the 80's such as LEEWAY, AGNOSTIC FRONT, and C.O.C., *Constant Struggle* is an incredible, riff-heavy album in the classic NYHC style by way of the Lone Star state.

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#### PARKWAY DRIVE

*Killing With A Smile*

RES1045: CD

In May 2005 PARKWAY DRIVE headed to the USA to record their debut album with renowned metal producer and KILLSWITCH ENGAGE guitarist Adam Dutkiewicz (Unearth, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE and FROM AUTUMN TO ASHES). The result is *Killing With A Smile*, 11 tracks of pure rage, and without question PARKWAY DRIVE's finest hour. Swe-death riffs, punishing breakdowns, thick rhythms, mayhem inducing blastbeats and a technical precision that borders on frightening, PARKWAY DRIVE transcend cliched labels like "metalcore" with ease.

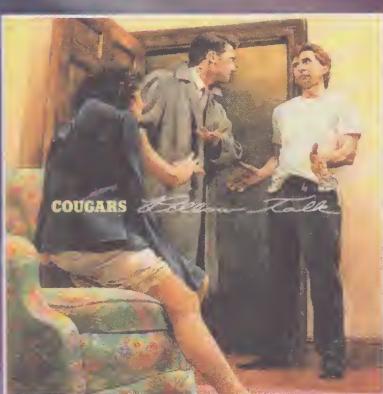


#### COUGARS

*Pillow Talk*

GKT17: CD

Out Now! on Go Kart Records  
"A rock band making rock music." That's how Chicago's COUGARS, if prodded, would describe what they are. With the helping hand of legendary recording engineer Steve Albini, COUGARS have essentially captured the blaring intensity of their live performances on analog tape for their second full length album, *Pillow Talk*. A monster of an album featuring ten brand new tracks, it is a testament to COUGARS unwavering raucous instinct.

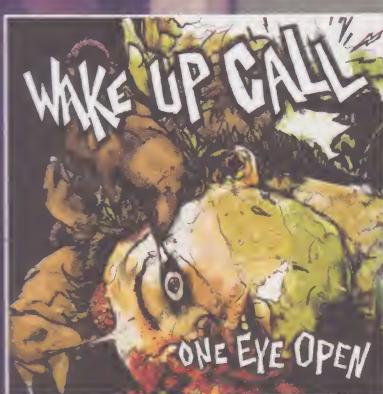


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photo of QUICKSAND by Dave Mandel

ARTIST JULIE DOUCET OPE

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